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Chairman:	Mr. AL-SHAALI	(United Arab Emirates)
later:	Mr. SLABY (Vice-Chairman)	(Czechoslovakia)

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ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 94: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/46/3, A/46/56-E/1991/6 and Corr.1, A/46/137-E/1991/40, A/46/281-E/1991/112, A/46/315, A/46/360, A/46/361, A/46/362, A/46/366, A/46/414 and A/46/501/Rev.1)

(a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

1. Mr. NANDOE (Suriname) said that various speakers had already stressed the relationship between economic and social progress. In that respect, he drew attention to the sombre picture painted in the report of the Secretary-General on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6). In Asia and Africa, economic growth and per capita income had declined. Furthermore, unfavourable living conditions and the negative effects of structural adjustment programmes had led to a deterioration in the social situation of many developing countries.

2. Suriname therefore fully endorsed the priority being given to human development and to basic needs such as health, education, employment and food security. It would be unrealistic, however, to expect that sustainable development could be achieved without serious constraints. As long as there was a net transfer of wealth to the industrialized countries, there would be neither economic progress nor true human development in the developing countries. Suriname therefore hoped that the volume of concessional transfers of resources to developing countries could be taken into consideration and that additional resources could be released.

3. The United Nations system had participated in formulating the guiding principles for social development policies and programmes including the Forward-looking Strategies for the advancement of women. However, the situation had not always changed for the better. The Secretary-General observed in his report on the work of the Organization (A/46/1) that the war against hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment could not be left for the market to fight. His delegation therefore welcomed the adoption by the Economic and Social Council of decision 1991/230 in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to carry out consultations with all States Members of the Organization on the possibility of convening a world summit for social development.

4. The increasing numbers of youth in the world population, migratory movements between countries and the creation of new jobs to accommodate young people were challenges which would affect the social situation in general. Guidelines should be considered for future planning and appropriate follow-up of emerging youth-related issues such as drug abuse, AIDS and the integration of young women into society. Furthermore, refugee flows and natural and man-made disasters could lead to crises and social unrest. Timely measures must be taken to prevent social and political disturbances that could disrupt economic and social progress.

(Mr. Nandoe, Suriname)

5. The prospects for the future were not encouraging. The documents before the Committee indicated that the central role of Governments was being weakened and that the system of subsidies was being called into question. The World Bank had concluded in its 1991 World Development Report that a careful balancing was required between the roles of the Government and of the private sector. In that regard, Suriname welcomed the offer made by the representative of the Netherlands, on behalf of the European Community, to share experiences with developing countries in the field of restructuring national budgets and formulating and implementing realistic social policies. It should not be forgotten, however, that the industrialized countries were also being confronted with constraints in implementing their social policies.

6. Suriname was closely following the activities related to the organization of the International Year of the Family in 1994. It would establish an intergovernmental committee to coordinate and promote all family issues in the context of the Year with a view to protecting the family as the basic unit of society.

7. Mr. GRIBAA (Tunisia) called on all parties involved in conflicts and on the United Nations to make every effort to re-establish peace, the prerequisite for improving the social situation in the world. On that point, the Secretary-General had submitted an interim report (A/46/56-E/1991/6) which was valuable, but did not always deal in sufficient depth with the deterioration of the economic and social situation in the developing countries.

8. Economic growth was unquestionably an essential indicator of progress, but it could not in itself constitute the goal of development. Development must also mean greater life expectancy, a better health situation, political freedom, security and access to knowledge.

9. Although the countries of the third world had some control over such parameters as population growth, life expectancy, vaccination rates and commodities, which were directly related to their economic and social development policies, they had no control over other parameters such as debt, deterioration of the environment, world-wide inflation, exchange rates or energy costs, which could wreck their development strategies. The developed countries and the entire international community must pool their efforts to reduce the impact of those unfavourable factors on the development policies of the countries of the South. Tunisia fully appreciated the efforts already made by the developed countries, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

10. Tunisia looked upon man as the end and means of progress, and economic growth as an objective which was inseparable from wealth from a more equitable distribution of wealth. It had therefore made its structural adjustment programme part of a global plan for economic, social and cultural development and was establishing a coherent legislative framework in line with those objectives as well as mechanisms, institutions and programmes for protecting

(Mr. Gribaa, Tunisia)

the most vulnerable sectors of the population in particular. The changes that had occurred on the Tunisian political scene at the end of 1987 had given new and powerful impetus to that endeavour, focused on protecting the family, controlling population growth, improving the economic and social situation, combatting illiteracy, strengthening the access of women to employment and developing basic health services, and those activities had already yielded good results.

11. The role of the State had been redefined, with egalitarianism yielding place to the promotion of equal opportunities. For example, the State was pursuing a course of social solidarity, involving assistance to certain categories of disadvantaged persons (the elderly, the severely handicapped, underprivileged children) and of encouragement, aimed at integrating the poorest people in the production sector and involving them in development.

12. With respect to disabled persons, his Government's efforts were directed primarily to reviewing the situation, drafting legislation to protect such persons, diversifying sources of financing and rationalizing the management of available resources, ensuring the medical follow-up of pregnant women, finding better ways of absorbing disabled persons into society, assuming responsibility for severely disabled persons, integrating mildly disabled persons into normal institutions and promoting employment.

13. In its youth policy, Tunisia was striving primarily to prepare young people for life and to provide their integration in the development process. There were many laws that protected youth and children, and the results achieved by activities in that area were for the most part good. School attendance of children between the ages of 6 and 16 had reached a satisfactory level and was expected to reach 97 per cent by the year 2001.

14. Mr. FLORES BERMUDEZ (Honduras), speaking also on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, said that Central America had just undergone one of the most severe political crises in its recent history. The return to democracy in the region and the end of the cold war had enabled the countries of Central America to overcome fundamental differences and, where profound internal divisions subsisted, to work towards national reconciliation. It had also become possible to take measures at the regional level to improve national efforts in the economic, social and cultural spheres. For obvious reasons, security and disarmament continued to be the focus of attention, but the current economic and social situation in the region and the new spirit of cooperation shown by the countries of Central America had given new impetus to social development. It was therefore understandable that they wished to speak with a single voice in the general debate on that subject.

15. The Third Committee had been considering the question of social development since 1966, and the activities conducted by the United Nations in that area were gratifying, but the multilateral technical assistance and cooperation programmes that the Organization had set up elsewhere had not

(Mr. Flores Bermudez, Honduras)

prevented the living conditions in most developing countries from deteriorating. The housing shortage and problems with education, the food supply, health care and employment together with drug abuse, prostitution and corruption were sowing the seeds of social strife. The Governments of Central America had their hands tied by the external debt, economic adjustment, the loss of foreign markets, the flight of foreign capital towards the developed countries and a lack of technology.

16. The Governments of Costa Rica and El Salvador had embarked upon social policies aimed essentially at promoting and financing infrastructure projects, creating employment and improving education, health care and the food situation. The Government of Guatemala had resolutely launched a policy of national reconciliation and dialogue with the armed opposition. To that end, it had created the National Foundation for Peace and had decided to issue bonds earmarked exclusively for improving services for the poorest segments of the population. The wife of the President had initiated a plan of action focusing primarily on children, who made up 45 per cent of the population of Guatemala, and on young unmarried mothers. The projects undertaken within the framework of the plan of action required the financial and technical assistance of the United Nations and other interested organizations. The Government of Nicaragua had adopted an economic programme in 1991 that had substantially reduced inflation, the principal agent of poverty and social problems. Nicaragua had pursued its policy of national consensus through a far-reaching process of economic and social dialogue. In addition to various initiatives to protect children, youth, women and the family and to promote education, it had recently embarked upon a health care plan for the period 1991-1996. In November 1990, a social fund had been established to meet the most pressing needs of the people living in extreme poverty, which was the result of 10 years of war and economic adjustment efforts. A national programme to promote social development and wage war on poverty was under discussion. The Government of Honduras had set up a number of funds and bodies, in particular to offset the effects of economic structural adjustment measures. In view of the success of the Honduras Social Investment Fund, UNDP had asked the Fund's Executive Director to visit Haiti for the purpose of appraising Haiti's social programmes. Other countries of the region had also expressed an interest in the Honduran experience.

17. Those efforts were part of the regional peace process set in motion in 1987 with the Esquipulas II Agreement. Parallel to the political process, a social process had begun that had generated the 1989 El Salvador agreements, the 1989 summit of San Isidro de Coronado (Costa Rica) and the 1990 declaration of Antigua (Guatemala), and had eventually produced the Central American Economic Action Plan (PAECA), which was serving as a framework for the regional consultation and coordination mechanisms now in operation. In July 1991, the Presidents of Central America, meeting in El Salvador, had reaffirmed their interest in the social sector; they would meet again in Honduras on 12 and 13 December 1991 to give priority consideration to social questions and the war against poverty. They would work out a regional

(Mr. Flores Bermudez, Honduras)

programme designed to integrate the most vulnerable population groups in the structures of production and would fix precise targets for financial, human and technical resources. Based on national and regional priorities, the regional programme would give expression to the various initiatives already undertaken in the social sector.

18. The countries of Central America expressed their appreciation to Chile, which was working to prepare the world summit for social development planned for the middle of the decade, an initiative that they supported. They would like to see the Economic and Social Council expedite its preparatory work for the event and intended to contribute to the summit at Santiago on the basis of the results of the regional summit to be held in December in Honduras.

19. The international community should consider the terms of a new North-South dialogue so that international cooperation for social development would also help to create stability, peace and a strengthening of democracy. The countries of Central America regarded international cooperation as a way of achieving, as prescribed in Article 55 of the Charter of the United Nations, higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development.

20. Mr. BURCUOGLU (Turkey) referred to the social crisis affecting the entire international community and said that if no action was taken immediately, it would be increasingly difficult and costly to overcome.

21. Having experienced rapid social change and urbanization, Turkey sought to resolve its social problems by improving the quality of life of the population, ensuring equal advancement opportunities for all and promoting both individual initiatives and community solidarity. It was focusing in particular on protecting vulnerable groups (youth, the aged and disabled persons) so that they all could play a productive role in society. In other words, Turkey wanted economic growth with a human and social dimension.

22. In Turkey, young people of 15 to 24 accounted for more than 20 per cent of the population of 57 million. There were institutional arrangements and vocational training and integration programmes and work preparation programmes aimed at giving youth a sense of human values and the up-to-date knowledge they needed in order to take an active part in the daily life of their country. Protecting young people against such scourges as drug abuse, delinquency and AIDS remained a priority aim.

23. The family, the natural and basic unit of society, traditionally played a very important role in Turkey. It was the driving force of social solidarity and a strong bulwark against worsening social problems. The Government was trying to help the family adjust to the changing society. It had studied with great interest the report of the Secretary-General on preparations for the International Year of the Family (A/46/362), in which Turkey was participating actively. As indicated in paragraph 40 of the report, the Turkish Family Research Institute was acting as the national coordinating committee for the

(Mr. Burcuoglu, Turkey)

Year. In addition, various local committees were being formed. The first Family Week had been celebrated in May 1991. National agencies and non-governmental organizations would be taking part in the various activities planned. The International Year of the Family would be marked by a broad public awareness campaign, monthly meetings, a family council with the participation of experts from other countries and a films week.

24. The problem of ageing was beginning to affect Turkish society, which had always been respectful of the elderly. Institutions and the media were becoming increasingly aware of the problem and were raising public awareness.

25. Health services, rehabilitation centres and preferential rates in various sectors were provided to the elderly. Turkey welcomed the preliminary global targets proposed for 1992-2001 on the basis of the International Plan of action on Ageing and set forth in the report of the Secretary-General (A/46/361). It noted with satisfaction, too, the holding of the first International Day for the Elderly on 1 October.

26. Turkish society had long been aware of the problems of disabled persons. As indicated in paragraphs 51 and 64 of the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (A/46/366), in its Sixth Five-Year Plan (1990-1994) Turkey planned to develop medical services, rehabilitation centres and institutions catering to disabled persons. Its intention was to integrate them into the daily life of society and to reduce their dependence on social services. Although it was not easy to ensure equal opportunity, Turkish legislation encouraged and even obliged enterprises to hire disabled persons. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security had a special unit for the employment of the disabled. Tax abatements were available to them. The national council of disabled persons, which played a coordinating role, was consulted when appropriate. Turkey had participated with 47 other countries in the first meeting of the special working group of government experts set up by the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-second session and mandated to develop standard rules for equal opportunity for disabled persons (Vienna, 2-6 September 1991). The new standard rules would provide Governments with an instrument for facilitating the implementation of the World Programme of Action and other international agreements. Turkey was proud of its participation in the process.

27. Referring to the Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future (A/46/414), he recalled that Turkey was among the 32 countries that had supplied information for the report.

28. His delegation welcomed the results of the thirty-second session of the Commission for Social Development, and was pleased with the spirit of cooperation and consensus that had prevailed during the session and with the streamlining of its methods of work.

(Mr. Burcuoglu, Turkey)

29. Quoting a passage from the Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization (A/46/1) reaffirming the United Nations concern to ensure individual welfare, he expressed his delegation's full agreement with the idea of convening a world summit on social development.

30. Miss AL-HAMAMI (Yemen) called attention to the importance of the report of the Secretary-General (A/46/360) and of the recommendations contained therein, given the importance of young people to society and the scope of the youth-oriented measures being taken at the national, regional and international levels in the context of the new world climate. The draft World Youth Programme of Action towards the Year 2000 and Beyond offered useful proposals, for instance in the areas of health, malnutrition and disease control, which were also relevant to other social categories, particularly in developing countries.

31. Yemen, being aware of young people's potential for development, afforded them broad participation in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country; they, in return, contributed effectively to general development.

32. Yemen considered that the true measure of a State's wealth was its ability to make the most of its human resources, for human beings must be considered both beneficiaries and one of the agents of development. Therefore, despite its limited resources, Yemen was adopting the necessary programmes and measures to allow families to participate in the economic and social development of its newly united society. Thus, Yemen was participating in the preparations for the International Year of the Family, to be held in 1994.

33. As the social customs of Yemen were defined by the basic principles of shariah, including goodness, generosity and tolerance, the family felt a real responsibility for the elderly. In addition, as a token of its loyalty towards those who had spared no effort to help society and its young people, the State attached particular importance to the elderly and granted them, for instance, a monthly allowance. It naturally supported all international efforts in favour of the elderly, as much for humanitarian reasons as in the interests of development.

34. Yemen was equally concerned with the disabled, who posed a similar humanitarian problem to all societies, particularly in developing countries, where they accounted for a substantial proportion of the population and represented a potential that must not be neglected. Accordingly, it was striving to integrate them into society.

35. The interest States took in the young, the elderly and the disabled should not be restricted by national boundaries. Yemen believed that attention should be paid to their circumstances throughout the world. Many mission reports described the manifold sufferings endured by such population groups in certain regions. That was particularly true of the vulnerable

(Miss Al-Hamami, Yemen)

groups in Iraqi society and it was to be hoped that they would receive the requisite humanitarian and food aid.

36. Yemen deplored the predicament inflicted on such dispossessed groups in Palestine, the occupied Palestinian territories and South Africa by the inhuman policies of the Israeli and South African authorities.

37. She called on all delegations once again to work together to achieve the Committee's aims and ensure the welfare of the individual.

38. Ms. LISSIDINI (Uruguay) said that she was alarmed by the Secretary-General's interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6), which noted the aggravation of poverty in Africa and Latin America. Uruguay's support for the convening of a world summit on social development was thus understandable.

39. As the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons drew to a close, it was obvious that public opinion was more aware of the problems of disabled persons and that legal instruments had been drawn up to guarantee the disabled equal opportunities. But there was still a long way to go in achieving all the objectives set at the outset of the Decade. Uruguay, for its part, had established a system for the protection of disabled persons, who were thus assured of medical, educational, psychological, social, economic and vocational services. The legislation passed was intended to implement the World Programme of Action adopted in 1982 and to enable every disabled person to participate fully in community life. A national commission had also been established comprising government bodies and representatives of disabled persons' associations. In addition, various seminars had been organized at the national level, and it was in Uruguay that a publication of the Latin American Regional Council of Disabled Peoples' International, circulated free of charge to interested individuals and organizations, was issued. Disabled Persons' Day would be observed in December and money would be collected on that occasion for disabled persons' organizations.

40. The increasing proportion of elderly people in the world population made it essential to integrate them into the development process. To do that, old people must be able to lead useful and independent lives. In Uruguay, there was an inter-ministerial commission to formulate and implement policies to help the elderly that were consistent with the International Plan of Action on Ageing. In addition, a draft code for the protection of the elderly was under consideration, and attention would be drawn to the particular problems of that population group on the occasion of International Day for the Elderly.

41. At the other extreme of the age pyramid, young people were experiencing different but no less serious problems. Uruguay supported the proposals for the preparation of a draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond (A/46/360). That programme should cover such topics as immigration, drug abuse, alcoholism, AIDS and access to education and other employment opportunities.

(Ms. Lissidini, Uruguay)

42. With the help of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Uruguay was conducting a survey in the hope of subsequently adopting the measures and policies required to meet the needs of young people and facilitate their integration into society. The youth situation called for specific measures; it would be recalled, for example, that current social and economic conditions were leading many young Uruguayans to emigrate.

43. The Uruguayan Government had been forced to implement an economic and budgetary adjustment plan that would undoubtedly aggravate the health, employment and housing situation of certain social groups. Such difficulties should be transient, and Uruguay had established an emergency social fund for the mamagement of resources allocated to social programmes and projects in order to alleviate them.

44. Mr. JAEGER (Austria) noted that the social problems of mankind were continuing to increase. Some 1.1 billion people, a full fifth of the world's population, were living in deplorable conditions of poverty. Although while the material problems of the industrialized countries were less pressing, those countries were suffering from terrible social problems. Such difficult and complex social questions required effective and world-wide multidisciplinary action, and the United Nations had an important part to play in that regard, particularly through the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at the United Nations Office at Vienna, which was the focal point for all activities of the United Nations system in the social field.

45. His delegation therefore regretted that some United Nations units dealing with social questions still remained outside the Centre and hoped that the General Assembly would endorse the Secretary-General's proposal to transfer the social functions still being performed elsewhere to the United Nations Office at Vienna, which could then be strengthened as recommended by General Assembly resolution 45/248.

46. Austria traditionally attached great importance to social development at both the national and international levels; it therefore followed with great interest the activities of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, which, with very limited staff and resources, had initiated or elaborated internationally recognized conventions and documents that affected literally everyone. That was true in particular of the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons adopted by the Commission for Social Development in February 1991, and the standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons currently being formulated.

(Mr. Jaeger, Austria)

47. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs was actively involved in establishing an effective United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme by reorganizing the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch. The Centre was also responsible for United Nations activities to mark the International Year of the Family in 1994. However, if the Centre was to fulfil its tasks, it must be provided with the necessary resources.

48. In 1991, the Centre had focused particular attention on the disabled. At the thirty-second session of the Commission for Social Development, his delegation had introduced a draft resolution on the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended working group to elaborate standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons. The resolution had been adopted and the working group had met from 2 to 6 September 1991 to start its work. The Austrian Government had contributed extrabudgetary resources for the working group in addition to its regular contribution to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

49. Concerning young people, his Government had continued in 1991 to finance the HOPE '87 employment programme, which consisted of hundreds of original projects for employment. In 1991, 10 new projects had led to the creation of some 250 jobs for young people in seven countries. Since the establishment of the programme in 1989, 28 projects amounting to approximately $US 600,000 had been financed in 16 countries (Colombia, Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, Ireland, Kenya, Brazil, Indonesia, India, Uruguay, Bulgaria, Hungary, Ghana, Chile, Czechoslovakia and Austria). In that way some 500 jobs had been created directly and many more indirectly.

50. On 1 March 1991 the United Nations and the Federal Government of Austria had signed a memorandum of understanding under which the Organization, through the United Nations Office at Vienna and the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, and Austria, through HOPE '87, agreed to work together to promote the participation of youth in income-generating activities through youth employment projects and appropriate occasional training and educational programmes. His delegation was aware of the limited nature of Austria's effort to alleviate a serious global problem, accordingly, any financial or other contribution from Member States or non-governmental organizations would be welcome.

51. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/106, the first International Day for the Elderly had been observed on 1 October 1991, at the United Nations Office at Vienna. On that occasion the Director-General of that Office had stressed that the ageing of the population was a revolution that would affect every individual and institution in the world and would have an impact at least as powerful as that of any of the great economic and social changes of the past.

(Mr. Jaeger, Austria)

52. Austria was one of the countries with the highest share of elderly people. More than 20 per cent of its population was over 60 years of age, and that percentage was expected to rise to almost 34 per cent by the year 2030. By 2025 there would be 1.2 billion elderly persons in the world, 70 per cent of them living in developing countries. Greater efforts were therefore required to meet the challenges posed by that situation. It would be necessary, for example, to develop old-age pension systems or adapt existing ones by means of structural reforms in order to guarantee adequate living standards for the elderly. With that in mind, the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-second session had elaborated United Nations Principles for Older Persons in the Context of the International Plan of Action on Ageing.

53. The family had an important role to play for the elderly, establishing a social link not only between young and older people but also with disabled persons. The International Year of the Family (1994) offered a unique opportunity to consider family issues at different levels, to take account of various concepts of the family in different socio-political and cultural systems and to identify the specific rights of the individual with respect to and within the family. Austria had been one of the first countries to contribute to the voluntary fund for the preparation for and observance of the International Year of the Family. That contribution would be used to establish a database on the family at the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. The Austrian Workers' Compensation Board had financed the publication of 7,500 copies of a United Nations pamphlet entitled "1994 - International Year of the Family - Building the Smallest Democracy at the Heart of Society", with a view to promoting the principles and objectives of the Year.

54. Since social conditions world-wide were inextricably linked with the development of other aspects of human existence such as the environment, economics, health, employment and, to a certain extent, international security, their improvement called for a collective effort at the international level, and there was no better forum for that purpose than the United Nations. His Government therefore supported the proposal to convene a world summit for social development.

55. Ms. DIJKSMA (Netherlands), addressing the topic of policies and programmes involving youth, said that the young people who would have to endure the long-term consequences of irresponsible environmental policies were concerned about the deterioration of the environment, the effects of which (the greenhouse effect, depletion of the ozone layer and increasing erosion) were more and more difficult to ignore, and were prepared to make an active contribution to the search for lasting solutions.

(Ms. Dijksma, Netherlands)

56. In response to the Brundtland report entitled "Our Common Future", which contained recommendations on policies for sustainable development that many countries were unfortunately being slow to apply, her Government had launched a national environmental policy plan (NEPP+). Aiming to provide for a better future, the plan required financial sacrifices, for example, by calling for a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 3-5 per cent between 1990 and 2000, even though that was still a long way from the 50 per cent reduction in energy consumption recommended in the Brundtland report.

57. She hoped that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in 1992 would lead to the signing of conventions on the climate, biological diversity and, possibly, forests. It was of the greatest importance that the Conference should involve non-governmental organizations active in various fields and also youth organizations.

58. The problem of the environment could not be separated from that of population growth. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had recently warned the world that continued population growth would endanger the ecological system. Although population growth had stopped accelerating, the population was still increasing in absolute terms by about 90 million people each year, with more than 90 per cent of that increase occurring in the developing countries. Birth control programmes had been set up in the developing countries to halt uncontrolled population growth. That effort would not suffice, however, without the creation of a new socio-economic context by discouraging child labour, providing social security and improving health care and nutrition programmes.

59. The Minister for Development Cooperation of the Netherlands had rightly stated that human development would be essential in the years to come and should emphasize health care and education, with special attention given to the situation of women. It should be pointed out that the rich countries accounted for only 5 per cent of world population growth but placed a much greater strain on the environment than the developing countries, where population growth was much higher. Countries which had so far concentrated their efforts on survival and progress must realize the undesirable impact those developments had on the environment and work together to ensure sustained development.

60. The Youth Forum held at in Vienna in May 1991 by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs had considered the question of communications between the United Nations system and youth organizations, and it had been recommended that the United Nations should hold such a forum each year to strengthen the participation of youth organizations in the work of United Nations bodies. The youth organizations of the Netherlands hoped that the United Nations would give favourable consideration to that recommendation. The planned launching by one Organization of a world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond indicated renewed

(Ms. Dijksma, Netherlands)

interest in matters of concern to youth. Young people were interested in a wide range of issues (drugs, health, AIDS, education, unemployment and housing). It was important to involve young people in developing countries in such programmes and to formulate separate national and regional programmes. Young people and non-governmental youth organizations should also be involved in drafting the programme of action as they could make a useful contribution by organizing cooperation and exchanges between young people in developed and developing countries.

61. In the Netherlands, young people were already actively helping to find solutions to some environmental problems and had recently conducted a national campaign to raise awareness among public bodies and business circles of the positive or negative effects on the environment of their production and consumption activities. Another initiative by young people in her country had been the establishment of an environmental university that would enable young people in the Netherlands and their peers in other countries to specialize in various environment-related subjects.

62. Young people could become more involved in the questions facing the United Nations if Member States included youth representatives in their delegations.

63. Mr. KALLEHAUGE (Denmark), speaking also as head of the international committee set up by the Danish Organization of Disabled Persons and as President of the Nordic Council of Organizations of Disabled Persons, said that the time had come to evaluate the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and to determine how to make it more operational by developing new strategies that would lead to integration, full participation and equal opportunities for disabled persons.

64. The ad hoc open-ended working group of Government experts that had started work in the first week of September on the elaboration of standard technical rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons would have a very complex task to perform. The Nordic countries, which wished the group success in its work, hoped that it would strive to produce a practical, action-oriented paper on how to approach the numerous problems facing persons with disabilities in their everyday life (such as problems of access, communications, education, employment, human rights, awareness campaigns or the formation and strengthening of organizations of disabled persons).

65. The Nordic countries had some experience in work with the disabled which they thought might be helpful to other countries. They had founded their policy on three basic principles: sectoral responsibility, solidarity and compensation. Since each of the rights proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was of crucial importance for persons with disabilities, ensuring them equal opportunities could be equated with fighting for their human rights. The visibility of the disabled minority in a society was an

(Mr. Kallehauge, Denmark)

important measure of its level of development and was indicative of the actual integration, from a disabled person's point of view, of the disabled. The problems of disabled persons were not only a question of social welfare policy but must also involve other areas of public administration and services, because to deny persons with disabilities equality was an infringement of their rights as free and equal members of society. It was not for individuals or charities, therefore, but for governments, national as well as local, to resolve disability issues. In the Nordic countries, disability policy was based on the principle of solidarity, expressed through the payment of taxes, which made it possible for Governments gradually to remove the barriers preventing people with disabilities from being integrated into society. The other principle governing the Nordic countries' disability policy was that disabled persons had the right to compensation, irrespective of their income, property and capital, in the form of technical aids, assistance from municipal authorities in buying a private car or adapting their homes, home help, transport facilities, special tools and machinery. Although generally accepted, the principle of compensation had yet to be implemented everywhere and in every respect in the Nordic countries. Nevertheless, it played an important role as the guiding principle whenever new policies or programmes were to be launched. Without compensation, no disabled person could join the workforce, so the Nordic countries considered it an investment in developing the potential of persons with disabilities. A disabled person's handicap depended on his environment and that made handicap a relative concept.

66. Disabled persons should be involved in decision-making and his delegation noted with satisfaction that persons with disabilities had been included in several delegations to the United Nations in recent years, an example which all Member States should be encouraged to follow.

67. On the initiative of the Nordic Council of Organizations of Disabled Persons, the Nordic development agencies had hosted a seminar on disabled people and development cooperation in Finland in March 1991. All the Nordic countries had met the target set for industrialized countries to spend at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national product on cooperation with developing countries. In 1992, Denmark would spend as much as 1 per cent of its GNP on development programmes. The seminar in Finland had adopted a resolution stating that disability aspects should be taken into account in all development cooperation programmes, which should be directed towards achieving equality of opportunity for the disabled, that organizations of people with disabilities should be more involved in planning, implementing and evaluating disability-oriented development programmes, and that disabled persons in developing countries should be encouraged to participate actively in decision-making in development cooperation programmes.

68. Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia) said that his country was following with interest the work of the ad hoc open-ended working group of Government experts to elaborate standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons, whose conclusions might be considered at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

69. The former social system in Czechoslovakia had been designed to meet the needs of a centrally planned economy, which made the transition to a market economy difficult, especially for disabled persons. The Government had been forced to set a figure of 5 per cent for the proportion of disabled persons to be employed by every enterprise with more than 20 employees. It had also set up a Governmental Committee for the Handicapped as an advisory and coordinating body to improve the living conditions of disabled persons.

70. Another urgent need in the current transitional period was to ensure favourable living conditions for families, which was why Czechoslovakia had supported the proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the Family. Activities in Czechoslovakia in preparation for the Year were aimed at solving the internal needs of families (by changing the system of family allowances and guaranteeing each family the minimum it needed in order to live).

71. In the forthcoming period, the main task would be to implement the rights of children on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Czechoslovakia had organized an international conference on partnership between parents and the State in preventing child abuse, and its social campaign was being developed with the broad cooperation of non-governmental organizations, private initiatives and religious organizations.

72. The formulation of a world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond as a basic component of preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year must be based on the experience gained in implementing the guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth. At the national level, those guidelines had made it possible in many cases to work out and implement complex strategic approaches to the problems of young people.

73. Nevertheless, the guidelines were not being implemented fast enough; in that regard, Czechoslovakia believed that the experience gained from the World Summit for Children could be used to good effect. Above all, it was necessary to focus on the most significant problems affecting young people (unemployment, access to education, environmental issues, illnesses, including AIDS, and drug abuse). Nor must it be forgotten that the basic goal was the full integration of young people into society. The conclusions and recommendations of the symposium held at Tokyo in July 1990 could be useful in that regard. Czechoslovakia had contributed to developing the international dialogue on the problems of young people by organizing the meeting of the European Parliament of Youth held at Prague in September 1991, which had been sponsored by the Council of Europe and attended by 250 secondary school pupils from 21 European countries.

74. Czechoslovakia wished to contribute to the development of European cooperation in the field of interregional consultations on developmental social welfare policies and programmes. It believed that the current changes in Europe required the holding of a European ministerial conference on social welfare policies and programmes. It was also considering the possibility of

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

organizing a meeting of European Ministers for Social Affairs at Bratislava in the autumn of 1992 and was currently engaged in consultations on the subject.

75. The recent seminar at Stockholm on the reform of United Nations economic and social activities had shown that the Organization had not achieved the expected results in the economic and social spheres. His delegation believed that that there was a lack of coordination between the Third Committee and the Second Committee and also between both those Committees and the General Assembly and the subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council, and especially between the two Committees and the specialized agencies. There was also still some duplication of activities. Efforts to correct that situation should therefore be intensified, especially in view of the current favourable international situation and the imminent changes at the United Nations.

76. Mr. ZHANG Jun (China) said that strengthened international cooperation in the field of social development was necessary to stimulate the economic growth and development of all countries, particularly developing countries. He therefore regretted the widening gap between North and South, which was illustrated by the fact that 700 million people in Asia, and between 1.1 and 1.2 billion people world-wide, were still living in poverty.

77. The Secretary-General's interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6) indicated that while many developing countries were beset by poverty, hunger, rapid population growth, worsening social conditions and huge debts, all corners of the globe were plagued by such problems as drug abuse, crime, violence and environmental degradation, which undermined world peace and stability and threatened mankind's very survival. The international community should view social development in terms of the need to safeguard peace and to promote the progress of humanity. Those objectives necessitated the establishment of a new and equitable international political and economic order that would reduce the disparities between rich and poor and would narrow the gap between North and South. In that connection, the United Nations should not confine itself to settling conflicts and solving political problems in the Security Council, but should also make practical efforts to improve world-wide living conditions, particularly in developing countries. To that end, it should direct more human and financial resources to the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna.

78. With respect to the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, which would end in 1992, had resulted in undeniable progress in such areas as public awareness of the concerns of disabled persons and legislation to protect their rights and interests. It was well known that China had always attached great importance to the well-being of disabled persons and had cooperated actively with the international community in that field. China was gratified that the Commission for Social Development, at its thirty-second session, had adopted a resolution on establishing and strengthening national coordinating committees

(Mr. Zhang Jun, China)

on disability or similar bodies, which the Economic and Social Council had adopted as resolution 1991/8 at its first regular session of 1991. China had established, at all levels from the central Government down to local administrations, federations of disabled persons which, taking into account the current situation in China, had helped to implement the country's five-year work programme for disabled persons.

79. Statistics showed that the world's ageing population was growing at an astronomical rate. Moreover, the rate of population ageing in the developing countries was expected to exceed that of the developed countries in the coming decades, thereby complicating existing problems. It was gratifying to note that since the adoption in 1982 of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, the international community and individual countries had given greater attention to the problems of elderly persons. On 1 October 1991, the United Nations and its Member States had observed the first International Day for the Elderly. Preparations were under way to mark the tenth anniversary of the World Assembly on Ageing and of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, and a new programme of activities on ageing for 1992 and beyond was being formulated.

80. With 97 million elderly people, a figure which was expected to reach 130 million by the year 2000 and accounted for 11 per cent of its total population, China had entered the ranks of countries with ageing populations. Committees on ageing had been set up at all levels, and associations of elderly persons had been formed in both urban and rural communities, to help safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the elderly, utilize their potential and address their concerns.

81. The destiny of individual countries and of all mankind would be strongly influenced by current approaches to issues involving youth. Since the designation of 1985 as the International Youth Year, countries had undertaken a variety of activities to promote the participation and development of youth. Preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year in 1995 included the elaboration of a draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond. His delegation felt that the programme should be action-oriented and that its objectives should be in line with the current situation. The views of all countries should be sought in its preparation.

82. As a developing country with a population of over 1.1 billion, China attached special importance to social development. Over the past 12 years, its policy of reform and openness had stimulated unprecedented progress in the social sector and in national economic development. Economic development plans included social development goals in such areas as job creation, income distribution, education, social welfare and the advancement of women, the elderly, the disabled and other special groups. In the summer of 1991, China had successfully mobilized all its resources to assist the elderly, the disabled, women and children who had suffered from the disastrous floods which

(Mr. Zhang Jun, China)

had hit the country, thereby demonstrating yet again the superiority of China's social system. His Government felt that sound management of national affairs was in itself a contribution to the international community. It was also ready to continue to draw upon the experience of other countries and to cooperate with them to promote social development throughout the world.

83. Mr. Slaby (Czechoslovakia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

84. Mr. SHIN (Republic of Korea) said that although the new era in which democratic governments were replacing single-party systems offered new hope for human dignity and political freedom, most of the changes to date had taken place on the political front. The peace dividend, which had been expected to result in a significant reallocation of resources to social development, remained elusive.

85. Three quarters of the world's population received only 15 per cent of its total income, while average income in the North was eighteen times that in the South. Given those facts, it was difficult to subscribe entirely to the view that economic growth and social development were independent and that social development problems could be solved through the adjustment of income distribution alone, without taking economic factors into account. Social development efforts were bound to fail in the absence of a certain degree of economic growth. It was difficult to see how social development could be addressed when all available resources must be used to feed and shelter the population. It was therefore necessary to consider realistic measures for the eradication of poverty, or at least of absolute poverty.

86. In the 1960s, his Government had focused its efforts on economic development, taking full advantage of external financial aid. Only after eliminating absolute poverty, in the late 1960s, had it tackled the issue of social development. Clearly, international aid had played a critical role in breaking the vicious circle of poverty, especially at the initial stages of economic development.

87. The principle of self-help was equally important, however. The need for public sector intervention, especially in countries whose private sector was relatively undeveloped, could not be overemphasized. Since the demand for resources far exceeded their availability in many sectors, Governments must ensure appropriate resource distribution and administration.

88. Although the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons had undeniably brought about a perceptible improvement in the situation of that social group, in particular through the awareness promotion activities of the United Nations, the media and NGOs, the achievements of the Decade had fallen far short of the hopes placed in the World Programme of Action. It was essential, as called for in General Assembly resolution 45/91, to shift the focus of programmes on disability from awareness-raising to action and to support the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in elaborating a long-term strategy to ensure the continuation of the World Programme of Action.

(Mr. Shin, Republic of Korea)

89. The long-term strategy should consider various types of domestic legislation that reflected the diversity of legal systems, cultural values and stages of development, and an in-depth study should be carried out on factors that determined the degree of success or failure of such legislation. The Republic of Korea had recently adopted legislation requiring employers to allocate at least 1 per cent of all positions to disabled persons.

90. De jure protection alone, however, was not enough. In order to create a society for all, disabled persons must not be considered merely as recipients of long-term care, but as active participants in economic and social development. They must receive vocational training, and their employers, whether public or private, must provide them with an appropriately adapted workplace, even if that meant job restructuring and modification of equipment.

91. Concerning young people, whose future depended upon the quality of health care and social infrastructures - as did, therefore, the future of the world - and who had been the victims of armed conflicts, malnutrition, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse and illiteracy, his delegation had a number of suggestions to make on the implementation of the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond, which was still in the embryonic stage. In the first place, the programme of action must not serve to blur the cultural differences between young people of different countries. Secondly, an order of priority for considering questions concerning youth at the international level must be set. Juvenile delinquency deserved top priority, and must be addressed by focusing on the role of the family and on education that prepared for life in society. Another high priority area was the plight of poor urban and rural young people who had been marginalized by industrialization but whose participation in economic and social development was indispensable.

92. The Secretary-General's report on international cooperation on ageing for 1992 and beyond (46/361) stressed two disturbing factors: the absence of an institutional infrastructure to accommodate the increasing numbers of the elderly and the uncertainty that the family would be able to continue providing care for its elderly members as in the past. The question of the elderly had many facets and was more than just a problem of housing. From the point of view of development, the world could only benefit from the experience and wisdom of the elderly. Furthermore, the elderly needed, at least as much as financial independence, to have a sense of contributing to the rest of society. In that context, the preliminary global target of a global corps of senior volunteers for development, described in the report, deserved further consideration.

93. Mr. EKE (Benin) noted that the objectives set 22 years previously by the General Assembly in the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, namely the elimination of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, the equitable distribution of national income, the eradication of illiteracy and the right of everyone to education, employment, health care and housing, were far from

(Mr. Eke, Benin)

being attained. Since 1971, the number of least developed countries had doubled, and more than 70 per cent of the adult population of those countries and more than 33 per cent of their total population were illiterate. One fifth of the world's population and one third of the population of the developing countries lived in permanent poverty. Drug abuse, the rural exodus, unemployment among young people and racism and other forms of discrimination were, in fact, on the increase.

94. Demographic pressure had been jeopardizing economic growth for several years. Under the Declaration, each Government had the responsibility of ensuring the social progress and well-being of its people, a point of view that his Government shared, the President of Benin having only recently underscored that social and economic development was above all the affair of each and every inhabitant of that country.

95. But the international community also had a role to play in promoting social development in the developing countries, particularly in Africa. The far-reaching socio-political changes that had taken place around the world would remain without effect if such economic problems as North-South relations and the African debt were not resolved. With regard to social development, the international community must intervene to ensure that the winds of democracy did not blow in the desert. In that connection, his delegation underscored the pertinence of the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future (A/46/414) and called upon the United Nations bodies to cooperate with other intergovernmental organizations to help Governments resolve the economic and social problems of concern to the population in general to which the Secretary-General had referred in the report.

96. His delegation was pleased that the General Assembly had proclaimed 1994 the International Year of the Family; it was convinced that observing the Year would make an important contribution to the well-being of mankind. Benin attached great importance to the family as the basic unit of society, and his Government was undertaking special efforts to improve mother and child health as part of the Expanded Vaccination Programme, to combat malnutrition and common childhood illnesses, to provide rural areas with drinking water, to achieve a gradual reduction of illiteracy and to make education universal.

97. Concerning the most vulnerable social groups, each State must ensure equality of opportunities for disabled persons so that they could be fully integrated into active life and promote the involvement of the elderly in the economic and social development process. However, owing to the economic difficulties that they were facing, developing countries were less able to carry out programmes for those social groups.

98. As young people were often at the vanguard of political and social change, their participation in development was an absolute necessity for countries like Benin. The new democracies in particular could only last if

(Mr. Eke, Benin)

they gave priority attention to protecting young people's human rights, in particular the right to education and employment. Benin also took measures to protect young people from drugs and to combat the problem of street children by creating occupational and social reintegration centres for minors in difficult circumstances.

99. As there could be no social development without economic development, all disadvantaged and marginalized groups must be allowed to make their full contribution, and more assistance must be given to the developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, which had been compelled to reduce their social programmes because of the debt burden and other economic problems.

100. Mr. FISSENKO (Belarus) said that statements made in the Committee had indicated that man was the means and end of economic development, that economic progress must have a solid social basis and that the social aspects of development were playing a growing role in maintaining the domestic and external security of Member States. It had also been pointed out that, although each country had the primary responsibility for its own development, the international community had to create conditions to facilitate the economic and social development of all its members, particularly that of the developing countries.

101. In considering agenda item 94 (a), the Committee had before it 10 or so reports containing constructive and interesting recommendations and proposals, although the number of reports on that agenda item should be limited in the future.

102. In his interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56), the Secretary-General noted that the decade of the 1980s had been a period of solid improvements in the world social situation in many countries, of unprecedented reversals in some others and of radical changes in the economic and social institutions in still others.

103. In the countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the region to which the Republic of Belarus belonged, the changes had been far-reaching. In addition to reforming political institutions, those countries were engaged in changing economic and social structures, which until now had been under State control, in order to adapt them to a market economy. But even if one acknowledged that the speedy and radical changes in international relations, from which ideological conflicts had virtually been eliminated, the growth of scientific knowledge about the relationship between the economy and the environment and the deeper commitment on the part of Governments to seek solutions to common problems were so many factors which now held forth brighter prospects for international cooperation in the coming decade, it should be recognized that by abandoning a system of State control in order to make a transition to a market economy, the region had committed itself to a wholly unprecedented task and that the expectation that the transformation would be speedy was unlikely to be realized.

(Mr. Fissenko, Belarus)

104. The transformation was encountering the most complex political, economic and social problems. Since the beginning of 1991, the situation had even assumed crisis proportions in Belarus, which was confronted with an enormous budget deficit and the collapse of the credit system and consumer goods market. The ill-considered reform of retail prices introduced by the central administration had caused social discontent which was being openly expressed.

105. The Parliament of Belarus had ratified the State programme of the Republic concerning the stabilization of the economy and the social welfare of the population, the objectives of which were to: carry out a programme for adapting to the market economy, prevent economic collapse, curb inflation and ensure monetary circulation; halt the decline in the population's living standard; and ensure the supply of food products, medicine and other essential goods to the population. In order to achieve those goals, there were plans to speed up the establishment of a market economy, reorganize finances, attract foreign capital, privatize the economy, apply the principle of "living according to one's means", allocate as a matter of priority material and technical resources to the agro-industrial complex, build facilities for eliminating the consequences of the Chernobyl accident and set up a consumer goods industry.

106. With regard to the social welfare of the population, there were plans to increase in 1992 average salaries in the productive sector by 50 to 100 per cent on the basis of the level of 1990, complete the establishment of a system of minimum consumer budgets for different social groups, determine the current value of consumer goods and set a minimum living standard.

107. His country had adopted a new pension law which increased the minimum level of pension payments on the basis of age and that of pensions and benefits for disabled persons. The Republic had established a social welfare system for disabled persons with modest resources: for example, plans had been made to set up for the disabled special-purpose funds and reserves of essential goods, enable them to receive free medical services and discounts on charges for public services, and open centres for social assistance and specialized care. The establishment of a pension and social-insurance system for non-salaried workers should be completed in 1992.

108. The Republic intended to implement an employment policy aimed at preventing the spread of unemployment. There were plans to establish a national employment agency and a State employment fund for distributing unemployment benefits.

109. The Secretary-General had rightly emphasized in his report that the seriousness of environmental problems was of particular concern to the population because they strongly influenced economic and social development. It should be recalled in that regard that Belarus had to solve its social problems in an economic situation that had been clearly complicated by the tragic Chernobyl accident, which was referred to briefly in paragraph 36 of

(Mr. Fissenko, Belarus)

the report. The Belarusian delegation believed that the impact of that accident on the population of the Republic and of other countries was such that it should have been the subject of a separate paragraph in the report and that the environment should have been dealt with in a special section of the 1993 Report on the World Social Situation (a draft framework).

110. The United Nations should continue to give priority to programmes for improving in concrete terms the situation of women and that of the most vulnerable groups, namely the disabled, elderly persons and young people. Belarus therefore supported the idea of organizing a second United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1994-2003) and the decision to celebrate in 1994 the International Year of the Family, in which it planned to take part. Furthermore, it attached great importance to the strengthening of the family as the basic unit of society, which had been affected by political, economic and social phenomena that had come about in Belarusian society. The number of families there was increasing more rapidly than the total population although the average family size had decreased from 3.7 in 1959 to 3.2 today.

111. His delegation welcomed the contribution by the United Nations agencies that dealt with social questions, particularly in the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development, and the decisions taken by them on implementing plans and action programmes concerning social development, disabled persons, the elderly and the young people, as well as on enhancing the role of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna. It also supported strengthening the role of the Commission for Social Development, which should, like the Commission on Human Rights, hold annual sessions. The Belarusian delegation wished in particular to support the recommendation by the Commission for Social Development on the convening of regional conferences of ministers for social affairs and the recommendation by the Economic and Social Council on the need to prepare for an international summit meeting on social development problems.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

112. Mrs. AGUILERA (Mexico) speaking on behalf of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela, expressed concern that the documentation of agenda item 96, narcotic drugs, was not yet available, which prevented delegations from evaluating the process of consolidating the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. It was therefore necessary to postpone consideration of that item until a later date; accordingly, she proposed that on Wednesday, 30 October, the Committee, after listening to the introduction by the Executive Director of the Programme, should conduct consultations in order to decide on the date for considering the question. She requested the Committee to take a decision at the current meeting to postpone consideration of that agenda item.

(Mrs. Aguilera, Mexico)

113. After a procedural discussion in which Miss MEHTA (India), Mr. OURESHI (Pakistan), Mr. RADZI (Malaysia), Mr. KOTEY (Ghana), Miss DIOP (Senegal), Mrs. BOUKADOUM (Algeria), Mrs. KODIKARE (Philippines), Mrs. ZIBRY (Egypt), Mr. STUART (Australia), Mr. KUEHL (United States of America), Mr. ALFARO-PINEDA (El Salvador), Miss BOTERO (Colombia), Mr. PALACIOS (Cuba), Mr. RUSTICO (Italy) and Mr. AL-KINDI (United Arab Emirates) took part, the CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should postpone taking a decision on the matter until Monday, 28 October, in order to enable the Bureau to consider the situation.

114. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
23rd meeting
held on
Monday, 28 October 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates)

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(a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 94: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/46/3 (chap. VI, sect. B), A/46/56-E/1991/6 and Corr.1, A/46/137-E/1991/40, A/46/281-E/1991/112, A/46/315, 360, 361, 362 and Corr.1, 366, 414, 501/Rev.1)

1. Mrs. BOUKADOUM (Algeria) said that the ever-widening gap between rich and poor countries could trigger a major upheavel. The Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, adopted at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly, had emphasized the need to guarantee the basic right of all human beings to a life free from hunger, poverty, disease and ignorance. The eradication of poverty was also a priority objective of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. That new consensus on the promotion of human development was based on the premise not only that each country was responsible for its own development but also that the international community had an obligation to create a global environment that was conducive to economic growth and to encourage social development in the developing countries. The United Nations remained the ideal framework for an integrated, comprehensive approach to all those aspects of development. However, as the Director of the Social Development Division had said, the United Nations and, in particular, the Division could not perform their task if they did not have the necessary human, material and financial resources. It was therefore essential that steps be taken to support the Division's activities and to enable it to fulfil its mandate more effectively.

2. In an increasingly interdependent world, only a collective approach could solve the most complex problems confronting human society. The World Summit for Children had validated that approach and the international community should continue along those lines. In that connection, Algeria reaffirmed its support for the proposal to hold a world summit for social development. It hoped that the proposal would materialize as soon as possible and would lead to effective measures for the promotion of social development in the developing countries.

3. She was deeply concerned that the interim report of the Secretary-General on the world social situation (A/46/56), dealt almost exclusively with the recent changes in Central and Eastern Europe and failed to mention the continuing deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the developing countries, even though they too had embarked on a process of democratization which they hoped to complete despite the current unfavourable economic situation. The international community must not turn its back on the serious problems of the developing world as a whole, nor forget the commitments it had made to it. In that connection, her delegation reaffirmed the validity of

(Mr. Boukadoum, Algeria)

Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/4 inviting the Secretary-General to reorient his report to reflect the concerns expressed by the Group of 77.

4. She welcomed the various activities undertaken in the social sphere: the implementation of the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future, the preparations for the International Year of the Family and the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, the International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Programme for International Literacy Year. She had followed with particular interest the preparation of the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond.

5. As a follow-up to the International Youth Year in 1985, which had led Governments to make new commitments to youth, Algeria was endeavouring to improve the living conditions of young people, particularly in the priority sectors of education, training and employment. It believed that the legitimate needs of youth in those sectors, as well as in the areas of food, health and culture, must be tackled without delay and that practical, urgent solutions to the problems of youth must be sought in cooperation with other States. The celebration in 1995 of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year would be an occasion to give new impetus to efforts to achieve the goals of integration, development and well-being for youth. Her delegation supported the overall thrust of the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond proposed by the Secretary-General and particularly endorsed his views on the need to give priority to disadvantaged and underprivileged youth.

6. Mr. RUDI (Albania) said that social problems were occupying an increasingly important place both in United Nations programmes and strategies for development and in the national development programmes of individual countries. He noted with satisfaction the growing awareness of the link between economic progress and social progress, which was clearly recognized in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. Furthermore, at a time when the alarming situation of the developing countries posed a threat to international peace and security and the industrialized countries were experiencing many development-related social problems, a third group of countries had been added: the countries of Eastern Europe, which included Albania. Those countries were confronting new economic and social problems associated with their transition from a communist totalitarian system to democracy and from a centralized economy to a market economy. His delegation appealed to the United Nations and its specialized agencies to pay greater attention to those countries and to take action while there was still time.

7. As was recognized by the General Assembly Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples, young people were idealistic and cherished democracy. It was young people that had initiated the historic changes that had taken place in

(Mr. Rudi, Albania)

Albania, and young people were at the forefront of the movements for economic, political and social change in many countries of the world. His Government therefore attached the utmost importance to the search for concrete, effective and speedy ways to prepare youth to take up the responsibilities of the future. Its priorities in that area were education and employment. It highly appreciated the commitment made by the Ministers of Education of the States members of the European Community to assist Albania in that regard. Unfortunately, Albania was faced with a serious problem: the massive exodus of its young people, which had begun as a protest against the dictatorship, was now continuing for economic reasons, for while Albanian youth enjoyed all their human rights from a legal standpoint, in practice many economic difficulties impeded their effective enjoyment of those rights. To protect the newly emerging democracies, it was important to facilitate exchanges between youth organizations. Holding international youth meetings and establishing cultural ties between young people of different countries would promote mutual respect and solidarity among peoples and would be an effective way of fighting xenophobia, which unfortunately persisted in many countries. In Yugoslavia, for example, Serbia was currently using every possible means to destroy Albanian culture in Kosovo, by cutting off all links with Albania and closing down all the schools, including the University and the Academy of Sciences. That was a grave affront to Albanian national consciousness and a form of inquisition unprecedented in the recent history of civilized Europe.

8. With respect to ageing, the measures proposed in the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on ageing for 1992 and beyond (A/46/361) deserved careful analysis. In particular, it was necessary to enable the elderly to continue to take part in economic, social and public activities. In Albania, the elderly were honoured and in turn, tried to impart their experience of life to the younger generation.

9. Despite a growing awareness of the problems of the handicapped, much remained to be done to integrate handicapped persons in society and to achieve the targets of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. In particular, greater attention should be paid to the mentally handicapped. Unfortunately, in Albania, disabled persons were suffering the consequences of a disabled economy. The humanitarian aid provided by many European, United States and other charitable organizations was therefore greatly appreciated.

10. His Government attached great importance to the family as the basic unit of society. Traditionally, in Albania parents lived with their children, so that young people benefited from the experience of their elders, and elderly and disabled persons had the support of their families. His Government was doing its utmost to alleviate the impact of the economic crisis on family standards of living.

11. Albania was ready to cooperate with the United Nations and the specialized agencies in finding solutions to national and international social problems.

12. Mrs. VALDES (Spain), speaking on the subject of disabled persons, recalled that in its resolution 45/91 the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to review the translation into the official languages of the United Nations of the terms "impairment", "disablity", "handicap" and "disabled persons" used in the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action did not respond to that request. She attached the utmost importance to that issue, believeing it vital to eliminate certain pejorative and discriminatory terms used in United Nations working papers on disabled persons. Her delegation understood that the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Disability had dealt with the matter satisfactorily in his final report to the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1991/31).

13. Regarding the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond, she recalled that preparation of the programme should be based on the guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth adopted by the General Assembly. She also believed that specific targets should be set, under the new programme of action, not only for education, training and employment but also in such fields as quality of life, equal opportunities, participation, the setting up of associations and international cooperation.

14. Her delegation had noted with particular interest the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on ageing for 1992 and beyond (A/46/361). It was essential to establish a social security system which provided the elderly with adequate resources to live in dignity.

15. Lastly, her delegation saw great value in the debates on social issues taking place in different international bodies. It looked forward with interest to the regional Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Social Affairs to be held at Bratislava in 1992. It also welcomed the Secretary-General's consultations with all Member States on the possible holding of a world summit for social development.

16. Mr. FERNANDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba) said that, far from bridging the gap between rich and poor countries, the development model that all developing countries were expected to follow forced them to pay an excessively high price in social and human terms. That situation was particularly serious in Latin America, where the problems of hunger, illiteracy and poor sanitary conditions had recently been compounded by the cholera epidemic.

17. The main problem, however, was that of servicing the external debt, which by the end of 1990 had stood at over $1,300 billion. The developed creditor countries and international financial institutions had, moreover, made the renewal of international credit conditional on the introduction of stringent economic adjustment programmes, which had had such adverse effects on the population of developing countries that the steady shrinkage of health, education, housing and social welfare budgets had come to be known as the "social debt".

(Mr. Fernandez Palacios, Cuba)

18. Latin America and Africa were the regions most affected by that economic and social crisis. In 1990, for example, there had been some 270 million poor people in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, accounting for 62 per cent of total population, and 84 million living in extreme poverty. Far from resolving the crisis, the neo-liberal economic policies foisted on the developing countries might trigger social upheavals which could undermine democratic gains. It was regrettable, therefore, that the Secretary-General scarcely touched on that situation in his interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56), championing, in a far from impartial manner, the alleged benefits of the market economy and downplaying social gains made outside the narrow framework of economic neo-liberalism.

19. His delegation agreed with the many other delegations that found it unacceptable that a supposedly universal report was in fact partial, selective and discriminatory, to the point of glossing over the very grave situation of the developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. How could a report on the world social situation ignore the social problems of regions where the social crisis was unquestionably the fundamental problem? Steps must be taken to ensure that the 1993 report on the world social situation was devoted especially to the situation in the developing countries, in keeping with the letter and the spirit of General Assembly resolution 44/56 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/4.

20. With regard to the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond (A/46/360), his delegation attached great importance to the three selected themes, namely, participation, development and peace. However, high priority should be given to analysing the socio-economic and political problems affecting young people in developing countries and to devising measures to protect them from the effects of the debt crisis and structural adjustment - aspects that were not adequately covered in the proposed strategy.

21. The question of ageing was taken very seriously in Cuba, where 12 per cent of the population were over 60 years of age. Cuban policy in that area was aimed at enabling elderly people to live a better life through full integration into society.

22. Regarding the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, he paid tribute to the United Nations and to non-governmental organizations for their activities to benefit the disabled, and hoped that international cooperation in that area would be strengthened so as to complement national efforts, particularly by developing countries.

23. Despite the unremitting hostility manifested by the world's most powerful country towards a small developing country through an inhuman economic embargo, Cuba had been able, in 30 years of revolution, to offer its population very superior living conditions, inter alia in the areas of health, education, food, employment, housing and social welfare. The Cuban people could pride themselves on the remarkable accomplishment of having built,

(Mr. Fernandez Palacios, Cuba)

despite all obstacles, an infinitely more just and humane society whose motto was social equity and equal opportunity for all. In Cuba, life expectancy was 74 years for men and almost 78 years for women; the country had one physician for every 275 inhabitants and one dentist for every 1,500 inhabitants. The infant mortality rate, 10.7 per 1,000 live births, was unequalled except in the most developed countries; social security payments, which were available to the entire population, amounted to 3.4 million pesos per day; and 1,137,000 persons received a retirement or disability pension or an allowance upon the death of a close relative. Currently, 1 out of every 10 Cubans collected pension benefits. The rate of school enrolment was 100 per cent for children between the ages of 6 and 11, and 94.4 per cent for adolescents between the ages of 12 and 14.

24. The fact that human rights and fundamental freedoms were often mentioned in the Third Committee's debates bore witness to the close relationship between development, social progress and the enjoyment of those rights. The time had come to call upon the international community, particularly the developed countries, to make every effort to resolve the economic crisis of the developing countries by establishing a more equitable system of exchange that would allow the populations of those countries to enjoy the most basic economic, social and cultural rights.

25. Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) said that the dramatic events in Eastern Europe, the Gulf region and the Soviet Union, which indicated the emergence of a new international order, should not eclipse the serious social problems which had yet to be resolved. Since the young, the elderly, women and the disabled were usually the first to be affected by such problems, the international community must redouble its efforts to promote the social welfare of those particularly vulnerable groups.

26. With reference to the statement of the Director of the Social Development Division, he felt that international meetings on social development should be held at the United Nations Office at Vienna, which was often responsible for preparing for such meetings; that practice would strengthen the role of the Office and would rationalize the use of limited resources. In addition, the Secretariat and the United Nations organs concerned with social development should coordinate their work more effectively.

27. In view of the scarcity of resources and the increase in the Secretariat's workload, the Third Committee should, in considering the budgetary implications of its activities, remain in close consultation with the Fifth Committee, in accordance with the budget process established in General Assembly resolution 41/213, so that the resolutions adopted would have a realistic chance of succeeding.

28. As the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons drew to a close, his delegation hoped that a long-term strategy (to the year 2000 and beyond) could be formulated to guarantee the equal rights and full participation of disabled persons in society. For its part, Japan was striving to incorporate the World

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons into its national policies, in cooperation with disabled persons themselves and with national non-governmental organizations concerned with the subject. Earlier in 1991, the Government had renewed its commitment to carrying out the long-term programme concerning disabled persons which it had formulated in 1982. He noted that the World Federation of the Deaf had held its eleventh World Congress in Tokyo from 5 to 11 July 1991. Eight hundred people from 55 countries had discussed the theme of equality and self-reliance, and the disabled participants had formulated proposals to enhance their integration into society.

29. The Japanese Government extended technical assistance to developing countries to promote the welfare of disabled persons. In that regard, it was pleased that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, to which it had contributed since 1980, had played an important role in supporting catalytic and innovative activities to benefit disabled persons.

30. The continuing growth of the world population increased the importance of issues concerning youth. Young people must be encouraged to take a positive attitude towards life and to participate fully in society, since their integration was, in the final analysis, a precondition for peace and human development. Such was the goal of Japan's programme of overseas cooperation volunteers, whom it sent to developing countries as part of its technical cooperation efforts and whose skills and dedication were highly appreciated by the recipient countries. The programme had the dual advantage of enhancing human resource development and giving Japanese volunteers the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of cultures different from their own. An increasing number of young people were participating in the programme.

31. His delegation hoped that the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing would provide an opportunity to formulate, in the context of intersectoral and international cooperation, an action-oriented programme of activities on ageing for 1992 and beyond.

32. In Japan, the improvement of public health had raised the average life expectancy to nearly 80 years. However, that meant that early in the next century, one out of four people in Japan would be over the age of 60. It was therefore necessary to ensure that that population group contributed to social development and did not place an excessive financial burden on the working population.

33. The average number of persons in the Japanese family was 3.1, and the most common family structure was the nuclear family. Because of the changing structure of the family and the changing roles of family members, the care of children and the elderly increasingly depended on State assistance. With respect to the International Year of the Family, to be observed in 1994, he hoped that preparations for the Year would be carried out with maximum efficiency, in view of the Organization's system-wide budgetary constraints.

34. Mr. LUNA (Peru) said that the elimination of the ideological conflicts that had impeded the work of the United Nations and the new spirit of consensus and cooperation which had come about should make it possible to adopt a new attitude with regard to the difficult social situation in developing countries.

35. General Assembly resolution 45/248, which related to the restructuring of United Nations services in Vienna, had not been implemented and there was a growing disparity between the meagre financial resources available to the bodies that dealt with social development and the scope of their mandates. It was important to lay down as a matter of urgency working methods which took into account the close link between the social sector and the economic sector in order to prevent resistance to change in the Secretariat and its services and the inadequate use of its meagre human and financial resources. It was therefore necessary to reorganize immediately the United Nations social development bodies, without denying the progress achieved in that field by the United Nations Office at Vienna and the bodies at Headquarters in New York.

36. The ubiquity of social concerns within the United Nations specialized agencies, which was due to the growing needs of developing countries in that field, required the adoption of a new approach. The United Nations therefore was in a relatively weak position when it attempted to solve the social problems of mankind. The endemic problems resulting from poverty were compounded by phenomena related to the destabilization of societies by political groups that resorted to violence as a means of political expression.

37. The dominant trends in the international economy and the recent political shift in favour of freedom clearly demonstrated the need to reconsider the relationship between social and economic factors. Civil society was becoming increasingly important in international relations as an element distinct from government mechanisms; and the view that the economic aspect should be subordinated to social needs was gaining ground. In that context, international cooperation in the social field must not be evaluated solely on the basis of its contribution to the achievement of quantitative objectives; its contribution to the political stability of countries must also be taken into account. Furthermore it was illusory to seek to reduce reality to purely accounting parameters; and the solution to social problems could not be sought within a strictly financial framework.

38. The mutual understanding between the developed and developing countries with regard to social problems was all the more necessary since the possible disintegration of society was a factor which might prove very harmful to new democratic structures, particularly those which were being consolidated, and which might call into question macroeconomic policies aimed at improving the economy. It was in the interest of all countries to work to ensure that the transition period that the international society was passing through was accompanied by a new perception of social questions which went beyond the myth of ready-made solutions and the idea that a given model of society could solve all problems.

(Mr. Luna, Peru)

39. The Secretary-General's interim report on the world social situation lacked a methodological framework. It should therefore be hoped that, on the basis of the draft general framework to be used from 1993 on, the report would not be simply an accurate account of social situations, but a document which encouraged reflection and made it possible to evaluate progress or set-backs in the social field.

40. The world summit for social development could be the occasion for devising new ways of perceiving the social field, which would make it possible to put an end to the fragmentation of concepts and promote the consideration of substantive matters.

41. Mr. KOUNKOU (Congo) said that his country hoped that the resources which until recently had been absorbed by the arms race would be devoted to human needs. The Secretary-General's interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6) provided ample proof of how alarming the situation was and why the past 10 years could be called a lost decade for the development of the South. The decline had been particularly evident in Africa, where IMF and the World Bank had had to recommend structural adjustment programmes. The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 in the end had not met the expectations of the continent and the appeal by UNICEF for adjustment with a human face had not had an impact because of local constraints. The drastic reduction in social budgets, which had become inevitable, had led to the collapse of social infrastructures and the deferring or abandonment, pure and simple, of some programmes. In Africa, the decline had given rise to social, economic and political demands.

42. In the Congo also, the social situation, particularly that of the most vulnerable groups had deteriorated in terms of employment, health and education. The Government could no longer finance the generous social policy that it had conducted. Although economic indicators ranked the Congo in the category of middle-income countries, social indicators would rather suggest that of the least developed countries.

43. In that context, a wave of social protests had burst forth at the beginning of the year, leading to profound political changes, which had culminated in the holding of a sovereign national conference. The conference had chosen private initiative as the driving force for socio-economic development, while preserving the State's role as the main agent of social development.

44. His delegation, which was concerned about the credibility of the new international order taking shape and welcomed the initiatives taken on behalf of the former communist countries in Europe, hoped that the same effort would also be undertaken for Africa. Underscoring the need for a global solution to all the problems linked to the social situation in the world, he said that his country supported the draft framework for the 1993 report. Accurate information on world socio-economic trends and the real situation of the developing countries could mobilize international political will and promote a

(Mr. Kounkou, Congo)

strong commitment to find satisfactory solutions. Those concerns were in keeping with the ones expressed in Economic and Social Council decision 1991/230, which called for the convening of a world summit for social development, an idea which his country supported.

45. Mrs. REFUVEILLE (France), quoting the President of the French Republic, said that economic and social policies should ensure that "no one is left by the side of the road" and support all international, regional, national or strictly local efforts that promoted social progress, without which the world could not achieve peace and economic progress.

46. The United Nations was alive to the issue, because it was turning with renewed interest to social questions. In that connection, France welcomed the results of the thirty-second session of the Commission for Social Development and subscribed largely to the conclusions contained in the Secretary-General's interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6). Her delegation had taken note of three areas of concern: the new social problems confronting the many countries that had embarked upon the road to a market economy in the course of the past two years, the persistence in the developed countries of pockets of poverty that called into question traditional social policies and the chronic inadequacy of social services in the countries of the third world, which usually reflected the failure of the economic development policies of the past decade.

47. The idea that social policies must go hand in hand with economic policies was gaining ground. France had always defended that notion, particularly in its activities in favour of developing countries, and considered that international organizations could do more. For that reason, it had noted with interest Economic and Social Council decision 1991/230 on convening a world summit for social development.

48. Concerning disabled persons, France had defined annual national priorities around a sole objective: establishing a global policy to integrate disabled persons. For children, priority had been given to their integration in an ordinary school environment, and care for severely disabled persons had been the subject of renewed efforts.

49. Family structure and lifestyles had changed profoundly over the past 20 years. Her Government ensured respect for the right of persons and couples to choose their way of life. That right was based on the principle of equality, both between men and women in all areas of life and among the various lifestyles, in accordance with French law, and also on the principle of national solidarity, priority assistance being given to children, the aged and the most disadvantaged families.

50. Concerning youth, France attached particular importance to the child's right to freedom of expression enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A perfect illustration of that attitude was the development in France of municipal children's councils. Her Government was also working to

(Mrs. Refuveille, France)

improve and broaden the definition of the rights of adolescents in order to facilitate their social and vocational integration and sought to provide for the hearing of children in judicial and administrative procedures and to address the question of the use of children in the media. France would hold a seminar on children and urbanization in January 1992 in cooperation with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. She hoped that the conclusions of the seminar would be of use to the working group that would meet to discuss the integration of youth in society at the thirty-third session of the Commission for Social Development, because urban growth generated social phenomena of exclusion and tension that primarily affected youth.

51. At the thirty-second session of the Commission for Social Development, her delegation had participated actively in discussions on the question of ageing; France fully supported the text submitted for the General Assembly's approval. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly would, in principle, devote two days in plenary meeting to the question. Those two days would constitute an international conference on ageing, which should be held at a high level and aim at defining global objectives for the period 1992-2001.

52. Consistent with the United Nations Principles for Older Persons - "To add life to the years that have been added to life" - French policy focused on the following objectives: helping the elderly to stay in their usual environment as long as they so desired and their state of health permitted, improving the efficiency and quality of institutions for the elderly, and modifying the system for caring for the elderly.

53. Mr. ERDENECHULUUN (Mongolia) said that lasting peace and security would be illusory without economic development and social progress. Although 1991 had been marked by progress in the political sphere and in the field of disarmament, economic and social problems remained unsolved. Nearly half the population of Asia still lived in poverty, despite sustained growth in output per capita in a number of countries of the region. The international community was under an obligation to create an environment propitious to economic growth and social development. For that reason, Mongolia fully supported a strengthening of United Nations activities in that area.

54. The convening of a world summit for social development would be the occasion for all countries of the world, developed and developing, to pool their efforts in the area. Emphasis should be placed on encouraging a more thorough evaluation of the possibilities for improving social conditions offered by the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future (E/CONF.80/10). Mongolia underlined the importance of greater regional cooperation and was pleased to note the Secretary-General's interest in the activities of ESCAP with regard to the implementation of the Guiding Principles (see document A/46/414), in particular the Fourth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Welfare and Social Development, held in Manila.

(Mr. Erdenechuluun, Mongolia)

55. Like other countries in transition, Mongolia was facing enormous economic and social difficulties, as pointed out in the realistic balance drawn by the Secretary-General in his interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6). His Government's social policy was focusing on those problems.

56. The promotion of equality between men and women remained an urgent task. Although the United Nations had made great efforts in that area and it was encouraging that the number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was increasing, de facto inequality persisted.

57. Mongolia supported the decision of the Commission on the Status of Women to focus on an in-depth discussion of priority themes and approved those selected for the thirty-eighth session of the Commission. The advancement of women must also be addressed at the 1992 World Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and other international forums. His Government expected the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) to review and formulate clear and specific guidelines for the future implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000.

58. In Mongolia, women enjoyed de jure equal rights in all spheres of social, economic and political life. The ongoing restructuring in the country had, however, brought to light many previously unacknowledged problems, such as the difficult living and working conditions of women, particularly in rural areas, the high rates of maternal and child mortality and the growing incidence of divorce and single-parent families. In that connection, his Government was grateful to UNIFEM for its support of national projects for the advancement of women.

59. With regard to youth, stronger efforts were required in the light of newly emerging issues. He underscored the importance of elaborating a sound world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond. The year 1995, when the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year would be celebrated, was an appropriate occasion for the adoption of that programme by the General Assembly. Young people constituted a large part of the population of Mongolia. They often led the struggle for democracy, liberalization of society and the transition to a market economy.

60. Mongolia attached great importance to the preparation and observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994. In his country, there were many questions in that regard, to which the Government attached particular attention but which were far from being resolved and could not be resolved without the participation of all sectors of society and specific programmes.

61. As the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons drew to an end, Mongolia felt that the progress made in implementing the World Programme of Action had

(Mr. Erdenechuluun, Mongolia)

not been sufficient. Persons with disabilities were full-fledged members of society. Much more should be done to make them active contributors to the socio-economic development of their countries. It was therefore necessary to strengthen United Nations activities and national efforts to that end.

62. With regard to the implementation of the programme for International Literacy Year, he noted with satisfaction that the Year and the World Conference on Education For All had marked a turning-point. He wished in particular to commend UNESCO, which had been the lead organization for the Year, the organizations which had sponsored the Jomtien Conference - UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank - and Governments that had launched national literacy programmes, as well as non-governmental organizations, the mass media and the private sector. The Asia and Pacific region, where three quarters of the world's illiterates lived, had been very active. Special mention should also be made of China and India in that regard.

63. In spite of those efforts, the eradication of illiteracy continued to be one of the urgent tasks of the international community. The General Assembly should continue to follow closely efforts to promote literacy and carry out, at its fiftieth session, a review of the progress made and the problems encountered. Mongolia would submit a draft resolution to that effect.

64. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) said that the issue of disabled persons was a problem that was not always appreciated. It should be noted in that regard that the progress made in implementing the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons had been far from satisfactory, particularly in the least developed countries, where many of them resorted to begging as the only means of livelihood. Pity was not a solution. In order to help disabled persons reintegrate into society, it was essential to gain a clear understanding of their needs and recognise the value of their potential. The objective should be to promote self-reliance through self-confidence and self-respect. For that reason, he hoped that the Third World Congress of Disabled People, which was to take place in Canada in April 1992, would address that issue in a pragmatic way.

65. Prevention also played an essential role in that field. In many countries, particularly least developed ones, lack of proper nutrition during pregnancy and early years of childhood was a principal cause of disability. In that connection, it was essential that organizations that dealt with food questions, such as the World Food Programme, UNICEF and WHO, should ensure nutritional programmes for children and nursing mothers.

66. Accidents and violence in all its forms were also causes of disability. In the developed world, there were insurance systems which guaranteed disabled persons medical treatment and compensated for lost earnings. Much needed to be done in that field in the rest of the world.

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

67. It was equally important to help disabled persons become integrated into society by setting up small income-generating enterprises, which required vocational training suited to their abilities. Only concerted action at the national level, together with international financial and material assistance, could enable Governments to develop institutions for providing such training.

68. There was also the problem of mentally retarded persons who required special care. Instead of considering that type of disability a stigma, society should view it as a challenge to man's ability to be compassionate and caring.

69. Aware of its responsibility to disabled persons, his Government had drawn up a national policy in the field which was implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs. That policy placed emphasis on community-based programmes, the idea being that people should be encouraged to share the moral responsibility towards the less fortunate in society. The Government had also set up an employment and rehabilitation programme for the disabled, which included both vocational training of the disabled and placement once they had acquired the necessary skills. In addition to special schools for the disabled, some regular schools provided special education for students with visual and hearing impediments.

70. In Bangladesh, most of the programmes for preventing disability were implemented with the assistance of UNICEF. They gave special emphasis to immunization, distribution of vitamin A capsules and information on nutrition.

71. Non-governmental organizations supported the efforts of the Government, which faced set-backs due to both a shortage of financial and technological resources and, more often, sheer human indifference to the fate of the so-called "untouchables".

72. At the international level, it was necessary to draw up a system-wide action plan for specialized agencies like ILO, WHO, UNESCO and UNICEF to ensure better implementation of programmes in that area.

73. Bangladesh endorsed the four key themes which, in the view of the Secretary-General, required the attention of the international community in the years to come, namely, integration of disabled persons into the mainstream, recognition and protection of the rights of disabled persons through legislation, the setting up of national coordinating mechanisms and the establishment of disabled persons' organizations. Much remained to be done in Bangladesh and other regions of the world in order to achieve those objectives and thereby bring about a "society for all by the year 2000".

The meeting rose at noon.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
24th meeting
held on
Monday, 28 October 1991
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates)

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AGENDA ITEM 94: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:

(a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 94: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/46/3 (chap. VI, sect. B), A/46/56-E/1991/6 and Corr.1, A/46/137-E/1991/40, A/46/281-E/1991/112, A/46/315, 360, 361, 362 and Corr.1, 366, 414, 501/Rev.1)

1. Mr. VELLA (Malta) said that the public sector's inability to meet all the needs of an ageing population, particularly in the developing countries, necessitated an alternative approach. Governments should strengthen the existing support systems of the family and the community, and particularly the mutual aid system of cooperatives in rural populations. Such activities should form an integral part of an overall economic and social development programme.

2. Currently, elderly people constituted 14.5 per cent of Malta's population; the figure was projected to reach 24 per cent by the year 2025. The family, which had traditionally supported the elderly in Maltese society, was under economic, social and psychological strain. The consequent growth of the public sector's role in caring for the elderly had, to date, been largely restricted to the provision of medical care and other basic humanitarian needs, with little emphasis on the integration of the elderly in the community. To broaden that approach, the Maltese Government had established, in 1987, the post of Parliamentary Secretary for the Care of the Elderly. The activities of that office had concentrated on providing an integrated network of services which enabled the elderly to live full lives in their own homes. A new geriatric hospital with in-patient and out-patient facilities also promised to enhance the care and rehabilitation of elderly people.

3. The Malta-based International Institute on Ageing had carried out numerous activities in 1991. It had conducted three short-term training courses on subjects relating to the elderly and had awarded scholarships for training courses to 102 candidates from developing countries. It had co-sponsored, with the United Nations Statistical Office, a seminar on disability statistics, and had raised over $200,000 in extrabudgetary resources for training and research activities. It had acquired databases on ageing from various United Nations bodies and the United States Government, and had undertaken collaborative studies and research. It had begun publishing a journal on elderly people in developing countries, which it distributed free of charge to 93 nations. It was also collaborating in the production and publication of country monographs on population ageing, and was giving technical and administrative support to a United Nations Population Fund project in China concerning elderly people and policy formulation.

(Mr. Vella, Malta)

4. Malta's traditional problem-oriented approach to caring for the elderly had caused the development of its welfare services to lag behind that of social security, and the State's social services had tended to replace, rather than complement, family support. However, the current Government had created a new Ministry for Social Policy to ensure an integrated approach to the twin objectives of basic equality and maximum individual care. The Ministry coordinated the efforts of State and voluntary agencies in such fields as health, social security, social and family welfare, housing, the handicapped, the elderly, women, employment and training. In particular, the training of workers in the field of family welfare was a high priority. The Maltese Government was committed to continuing its policy of transforming the welfare State to a welfare society in which all social institutions contributed to the well-being of the individual, the family and the community.

5. Mr. RANASINGHE (Sri Lanka) said that the expected ageing of the populations of both developed and developing countries in the coming decade would have the greatest impact on the developing world, where the annual growth rate of the number of elderly people was about twice the rate in the developed countries. The weakening of the extended family system because of urbanization and modernization would require developing countries to set up new social institutions and support systems to care for the elderly.

6. The problems of youth, including unemployment and the undermining of traditional values in a rapidly changing social and economic environment, threatened to give rise to social upheavals in developing countries. Youth in rural areas had special needs which required special attention.

7. Although medical science promised to provide eventual solutions to the problem of disabilities, all countries should take immediate action to allow disabled persons to maximize their abilities to get an education, perform meaningful jobs, support families and contribute to their communities.

8. Sri Lanka's free health services, free education, subsidized food, scholarships, free midday meals for school children and free textbooks had contributed to its low infant mortality, declining fertility, high literacy and high life-expectancy rates. The Government gave high priority to the development of youth, since one third of the population consisted of persons between the ages of 15 and 35. The creation of the Ministry for Youth Affairs in 1978 had represented a milestone by providing for enhanced coordination of the youth services of governmental and non-governmental organizations. One such governmental body was the National Youth Services Council, which promoted business enterprises among youth. The National Youth Clubs Federation was affiliated with about 6,000 local youth clubs, mainly in rural areas.

9. The unavailability of job opportunities for educated youth appeared to have been a root cause of insurgencies in Sri Lanka. After investigating the causes of youth unrest, a Presidential commission had recommended, inter alia, the strengthening of youth representation in political institutions and

(Mr. Ranasinghe, Sri Lanka)

administrative bodies; the creation of an office of Youth Ombudsman to look into specific grievances of youth; and the establishment of youth organizations at the village level to provide services and forums for discussion of the problems of youth. Accordingly, the Government had already taken measures to increase youth participation in local political bodies and to set up more regional colleges, a Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission and a National Education Commission. Moreover, the Government's poverty-alleviation programme had undertaken skill-development activities for youth.

10. The Sri Lankan Government had also acted on various United Nations recommendations. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 45/91, a national Committee for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons had been established to provide vocational training and support for the involvement of disabled persons in income-generating activities. In addition, a Trust Fund for the Visually Handicapped would be established in the near future to provide financial assistance. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/106, a National Committee on Ageing had been created. Additional welfare homes for the elderly had been set up and steps had been taken to introduce an insurance scheme that would cover disabled and elderly persons. His Government would welcome advice from United Nations bodies on rehabilitation activities for the disabled and the elderly.

11. Mr. VERMA (India) said that the high social cost of economic adjustment, especially for vulnerable groups, required Governments to fulfil their social responsibilities. Toleration of human and social deprivation was inconsistent with the generally accepted values of democracy and human rights. He therefore welcomed the consultations initiated on the holding of a world summit for social development.

12. Flexible responses to specific problems were required in order to build development and peace on a solid foundation of social justice. Although Governments had primary responsibility for addressing the problems of vulnerable groups, the talent and experience of non-governmental organizations should also be fully utilized.

13. The interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6) gave too little attention to the worsening economic situation in many developing countries and to the significant decline in their social and economic indicators. Such reports should reflect, in addition to the transformations in the formerly centrally planned economies, the continuing widespread poverty and attendant problems in the developing countries.

14. The statement in paragraph 3 of the interim report that sustained growth in output per capita in countries with large populations had helped raise incomes in countries that accounted for nearly 60 per cent of the population in developing countries obscured the larger economic picture: poverty in the developing countries was widespread and the overall external economic

(Mr. Verma, India)

environment continued to be unfavourable. The sustained growth of which the report had spoken neglected to mention the extremely low consumption base from which countries like India started.

15. His delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's report on policies and programmes involving youth (A/46/360) and agreed that the three objectives of the International Youth Year, namely participation, development and peace, should continue to be the theme of the programme of action. It had also noted with interest the reports on ageing (A/46/361), the disabled (A/46/366) and the International Year of the Family (A/46/362); it was to be hoped that they would generate more initiatives and concrete programmes.

16. In India, more than 50 per cent of a total population of approximately 850 million was below the age of 21. That posed tremendous challenges and opened up immense possibilities. His Government aimed to universalize elementary education and modernize vocational training. In formulating its educational policy, it gave particular attention to the socially disadvantaged, girls and women, people living in poor urban and rural areas, educationally deprived minorities and disabled persons. India attached great importance to the role of the United Nations in that area.

17. Mr. MONTALVO (Ecuador) said that his delegation supported the convening of a world summit for social development, which would provide an important opportunity to redefine policies and strategies, map out solutions and alert the international community to the current dramatic situation in the developing world.

18. With regard to the Secretary-General's interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6), his delegation had made clear its reservations on that document during the debate on the item in the Economic and Social Council. Ecuador was confident that the Secretary-General had taken due note of the comments of delegations and would abandon the limited, partial and discriminatory format of the current provisional report, in particular the inclusion of ideological and political language. It was to be hoped that the report would undertake a more serious and impartial economic analysis and a more balanced examination of the various economic indicators. References to UNDP and World Bank studies must be taken with caution, because as the Secretary-General himself had acknowledged (A/46/137-E/1991/40, para. 5), social indicators were different from social statistics. It should be borne in mind that the UNDP Human Development Report 1991 had been the subject of considerable criticism and therefore was not the best reference source for a study on the world social situation.

19. Turning to the specific subjects under consideration, his Government had taken due note of the Secretary-General's report on international cooperation on ageing (A/46/361) and intended to participate actively in the activities proposed for the decade 1992-2001. The National Congress of Ecuador had just adopted the Protection of the Aged Act, which drew upon principles established

(Mr. Montalvo, Ecuador)

at the international level in favour of the elderly. His Government supported the proposal to create a world fund for the elderly through the Banyan Fund, to which all States should contribute generously.

20. With regard to the Secretary-General's report on the disabled (A/46/366), his delegation subscribed to the need to shift the focus from awareness-raising to action. It was unfortunate, however, that only three staff members of the Secretariat were working in that area; that made effective action impossible. His delegation suggested creating an international foundation for the disabled in order to mobilize resources, along the lines of the Banyan Fund for the aged. His delegation had taken due note of the need to strengthen the national committees of disabled persons but underscored the importance of providing United Nations assistance so that those committees could remain properly informed. Disabled persons in the developing countries must receive better information on the numerous events referred to in the annex to the report, as well as assistance to enable them to attend. Ecuador was implementing the Tallinn Guidelines annexed to General Assembly resolution 44/70 to the best of its ability; but assistance must be provided to the poorest States to help them integrate disabled persons in society.

21. Concerning youth, Ecuador had drafted a programme in accordance with the objectives of the International Youth Year and the draft world youth programme of action. A National Youth Agency had been established to coordinate activities in line with the policies adopted by the General Assembly. The topics developed in the Secretary-General's report on policies and programmes involving youth (A/46/360) would be useful in guiding the work of Ecuador's youth organizations. As in the case of the disabled, however, his delegation hoped that the United Nations events in the area could be adequately publicized and that assistance could be made available to allow youths from poorer countries to attend, in particular the proposed world summit for social development.

22. His delegation had taken note of the Secretary-General's report on preparations for the 1994 International Year of the Family (A/46/362). It was essential to improve the effectiveness and the scope of the preparatory body. Ecuador shared the Secretary-General's concern at the reduced budget and called upon Member States to contribute to the Voluntary Fund for the Year. His delegation supported the initiative of the First Lady of Costa Rica and would participate in the "First Ladies for the Family" initiative in 1992.

23. Concerning the Secretary-General's report on International Literacy Year (A/46/281-E/1991/112), his Government attached high priority to the observance of the Year. President Rodrigo Borja had attended the World Conference on Education for All, held in Thailand in 1990, and his Government had undertaken an ambitious campaign to eradicate illiteracy with a view to attaining a literacy level similar to that of developed countries.

24. Mr. KOTEY (Ghana) said he regretted that the efforts of United Nations bodies in the social development sector had met with considerable frustration. The world had witnessed a growing deterioration in living conditions in the developing countries, where one third of the population lived in unimaginable poverty, and drug abuse, alcoholism, crime, prostitution and AIDS had become major problems.

25. His delegation supported the proposal that the Secretary-General should explore the feasibility of convening a world summit for social development to formulate a more coherent programme to strengthen the capacity of people to participate in international social development and to explore possible sources of financial support. It was essential to encourage a more in-depth evaluation of the possibilities for improving social conditions offered by the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes (A/46/414). The Secretary-General's conclusions focusing on family and community-oriented approaches in achieving the objectives identified by the Guiding Principles therefore needed pursuing.

26. Social development programmes and policies could be more effectively harmonized if based on the best available data concerning the needs of those most directly affected, and his delegation therefore endorsed the work begun on establishing a global information network. Emphasis was being placed on enhancing the implementation of the Guiding Principles through regional consultations, and efforts must be directed towards sustaining and developing those consultations that had already begun. The results should be analysed and disseminated widely to all regions to serve as guidelines.

27. With regard to youth, his Government had developed viable youth programmes, including the requisite structures for programmes at both national and international levels. Accordingly, it welcomed the Economic and Social Council's decision to establish an open-ended ad hoc working group of the Commission for Social Development. As a member of the Commission, Ghana looked forward to contributing to the work of the ad hoc group.

28. The activities of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons had heightened awareness for the problems and potentials of disabled persons. Ghana's disabled population was estimated at 1.4 million, a very high figure for a country with a total population of 14.5 million. In cooperation with disabled persons' organizations, the Government had put programmes in place that focused on rehabilitation and included vocational training, training in self-care activities, the provision of technical aids, orthopaedic devices and social counselling.

29. His delegation commended the decision by the Commission for Social Development to establish an ad hoc open-ended working group funded by voluntary contributions to elaborate standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons. Ghana was one of three African countries chosen to sponsor the meetings of the working group. With regard to national coordinating committees on disability, it was to be hoped that the

(Mr. Kotey, Ghana)

Commission's appeal to the United Nations and its specialized agencies to assist Member States, particularly the least developed countries, in establishing and strengthening them would not go unheeded. Such bodies could contribute to efforts to shift the focus of the Organization's disability programmes to concrete action.

30. On the question of ageing, his delegation called for implementation of the "Principles for Older Persons" recommended by the Commission for Social Development, and endorsed the efforts being made to develop an operational strategy for 1992 to 2001.

31. With regard to the family, his delegation shared the view that a system-wide coordinated approach and actions for the International Year should include activities of non-governmental organizations. In preparing programmes at the international level, Ghana proposed for consideration the effect of urbanization on families, particularly in the developing countries. That focus would highlight the problems that family systems faced as a result of rapid technological advances. Due attention should also be paid to the situation of migrant families.

32. Ms. SEMAFUMU (Uganda) said that the relaxation of tensions between East and West had provided the international community with a unique opportunity to tackle the world's pressing socio-economic problems. In many developing countries, the prevailing inequitable economic order continued to undermine Government's ability to maintain existing levels of social development. Structural-adjustment programmes had led to cuts in the already meagre resources allocated for social services. International efforts to address the socio-economic crisis must not be limited to cosmetic programmes for alleviating the social impact of structural-adjustment programmes on the poorest of the poor. The growing recognition of the human being as the centre of all development should lead to a balanced approach that promoted both economic growth and social progress.

33. The 1993 Report on the World Social Situation should give adequate attention to the situation in developing countries, including an in-depth analysis of the impact of structural-adjustment and poverty-alleviation programmes. The scant attention given to the AIDS problem in the draft framework of the 1993 Report was a matter of serious concern for her delegation. The AIDS pandemic in Uganda had had a grave socio-economic impact whose ramifications had not yet been fully determined. Her Government had created the Uganda AIDS Commission to plan and coordinate AIDS prevention and control on the basis of a multi-sectoral approach. Uganda hoped that the 1993 Report would give due attention to the AIDS pandemic and called upon the international community to increase support for its efforts.

34. The work of the United Nations in improving quantitative and qualitative indicators on social conditions and standards of living should give priority to improving social databases in developing countries. Paragraph 37 of the

(Ms. Semafumu, Uganda)

Secretary-General's report (A/46/137-E/1991/40) suggested that more attention could be given to indicators on freedom. Uganda hoped that consideration would be given to the pitfalls of the freedom index contained in the UNDP Human Development Report, 1991.

35. The reports by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the various programmes in the social field indicated modest levels of implementation. It might be worthwhile for the Commission for Social Development to review all such programmes in order to make recommendations on ensuring that future exercises were more effective and meaningful. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the shift in focus from awareness-raising to action in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/46/366). The Organization should continue to give special attention to the disabled in developing countries, who faced additional obstacles as a result of the economic situation. Uganda, which had an estimated 1.7 million disabled persons, was taking a number of measures to realize their potential. The National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda had received considerable support from the Government and the international community.

36. As to the Secretary-General's report on preparations for the International Year of the Family (A/46/362), her delegation looked forward to the results of the study entitled "Families in conditions of extreme poverty", which should include practical recommendations on improving their situation. Uganda supported the recommendation of the first ad hoc inter-agency meeting on the preparation of a technical paper on such issues as conceptualization, typologies, structures and functions concerning the family. The paper should follow a balanced approach taking account of differences in political, economic, social and cultural situations.

37. In spite of considerable constraints, the work of the United Nations in promoting social development had been commendable. Her delegation supported the efforts to strengthen the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna and hoped that that would not be done at the expense of other sectors of vital interest to developing countries. Those efforts should go hand in hand with measures to strengthen social units in the regional commissions in order to enhance the overall effectiveness of the Organization in that field. Lastly, her delegation fully supported the initiative to convene a world summit for social development, which could give great impetus to global efforts to promote social progress.

38. Ms. ZINDOGA (Zimbabwe said that the social cost of political change and economic adjustment had led to deterioration in quality of life in many parts of the world, especially the developing countries. More than 1 billion people did not enjoy the World Bank's "acceptable" standard of living, the majority of them being in the developing world, especially sub-Saharan Africa. That situation resulted from interacting economic, social and environmental factors, to which had been added the marginalization of the African continent

(Ms. Zindoga, Zimbabwe)

over the past two years, and "donor fatigue". It was time for the United Nations to play a role in reversing that trend and making the universalization of world social development a reality. If the emerging era was to be based on peace, justice, stability and cooperation, social problems should be accorded high priority, and the consultations on a possible world summit for social development were a step in the right direction.

39. Regarding the concerns of specific vulnerable groups in society, Zimbabwe welcomed the wide support by Member States for the drafting of standard rules for equalization of opportunities for disabled persons, and the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended working group for that purpose by the Commission for Social Development. Her delegation was concerned, however, that the guidelines prepared by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs on key disability issues had not been adequately incorporated into national disability programmes because of lack of advisory services, and urged the international community to contribute to the success of the Decade of Disabled Persons and to help national institutions for the disabled in the areas of capacity-building and sustainability.

40. The dramatic increase in unemployment among youth, especially in Africa and other parts of the developing world, was often accompanied by an increase in crime. Zimbabwe was attempting to curb both unemployment and crime by establishing vocational training centres to equip high school graduates for the labour market. Fair distribution of resources was imperative to safeguard vulnerable groups such as women and children. Despite the impetus of the 1990 World Summit for Children, the day-to-day life of millions of children had not yet improved. Women continued to be denied equal opportunity in training and employment, and in Africa and other developing countries, they bore the brunt of harsh economic realities and social evils. To fulfil its commitment to improving the status of women, her Government had embarked on a massive adult literacy campaign, the majority of whose participants were women. Her delegation was also pleased to note that the preparations for the International Year of the Family were well under way.

41. Mr. OUATTARA (Mali) said that the outline of the world social situation presented by the Secretary-General in his interim report (A/46/56-E/1991/40) showed major disparities between the developed countries, where standards of living continued to rise, and the developing countries, where poverty was deepening. The developed countries devoted more than half their public expenditure to the social sector, while the developing countries allocated to it a relatively small portion of their resources. Though they attached great importance to the social sector, their efforts had suffered setbacks from enormous economic problems, and required support through international solidarity. The current positive trends in international relations and growing mobilization to address social problems augured well for future international cooperation. Mali endorsed any action by the international community to resolve social problems, particularly the proposed world summit on social development.

(Mr. Ouattara, Mali)

42. The Government of Mali took into account the needs and concerns of all segments of society in its development planning. It took particular interest in the future of youth, and welcomed the preparation of a draft world youth programme of action; it believed that priority should be given to health, malnutrition, illiteracy, education and training, employment, rural migration, AIDS, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and integration of young women. Mali emphasized employment issues in particular,because of the growing number of young job seekers. The Government had therefore begun activities to promote entrepreneurship. The elderly, for their part, played a respected role in Malian society, where their memories were important to the predominant oral tradition. His delegation supported the activities on ageing outlined in the report (A/46/361).

43. It commended the international community's efforts for the integration of disabled persons. His Government's policy on the disabled had the goal of helping them to become independent and live from the fruits of their labour. He listed several associations for the disabled in Mali, in addition to the West African Federation of Disabled Persons' Associations, headquartered in Bamako.

44. No social policy could succeed without giving priority to family issues. A coherent family policy could serve as a counterweight to the fragmentation of social programmes. His delegation welcomed the proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the Family. Social well-being - a priority for all peoples - could only be achieved in a climate of peace, justice and solidarity.

45. Mrs. SYAHRUDDIN (Indonesia), referring to the interim report of the Secretary-General on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6) expressed her delegation's serious concern regarding the right to development, which should be adequately reflected in the 1993 Report. Joy over the easing of East-West tensions had been tempered by anxiety that emerging market economies would receive assistance at the expense of the developing countries. North-South polarization remained unresolved and a source of instability with no place in a new world order. While developing countries must ensure that their economies were responsive, the external economic environment must also lend itself to sustainable development. Moreover, social development would lead to future economic growth through improved education and literacy, adequate health care and shelter and reduced poverty. Accordingly, the description of improved quantitative and qualitative indicators in document A/46/137-E/1991/40 was welcome, as it would give decision makers better insight.

46. Turning to the question of ageing, she noted that one of the draft global targets was integration of ageing into mainstream development in the 1990s, which was necessary to avoid marginalizing the elderly and to retain their lifetime wealth of knowledge and skills. In Indonesia, improved health care had been translated into increased life expectancy and had made the question of ageing an important factor in long-term development planning. Her

(Mrs. Syahruddin, Indonesia)

Government had availed itself of advisory services of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development in coordinating activities related to health research and social development issues. It had also arranged the celebration of the International Day for the Elderly on 1 October.

47. Her delegation also welcomed the Secretary-General's report on policies and programmes involving youth (A/46/360). Among the priority issues identified for inclusion in the draft world youth programme of action, she stressed education and employment, particularly non-formal and vocational training necessary to provide employment skills. Its importance had been underscored by International Literacy Year, which had emphasized that widespread illiteracy seriously hindered development. Forty-two per cent of Indonesia's population was aged 15 or younger, and it was a national priority to provide that future generation with the means to contribute to development and to their own personal security.

48. Her delegation looked forward to the preparation of a long-term strategy to ensure the continuation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, and to the preparation of a manual on national disability legislation in developing countries. In Indonesia, the approach to integrating the disabled had been primarily at the community and grass-roots level. That issue should be approached as an integral aspect of national development. The disabled themselves must be integrated into the planning process and given the means to avail themselves of society's benefits.

49. The progress made in preparations for the International Year of the Family despite limited resources was commendable. Her delegation hoped that the perennial issue of scarce resources to implement social programmes would be resolved, so that the international community could address with conviction the aspirations of the world's poor, illiterate and underdeveloped.

50. Ms. SEMAFUMU (Uganda) said that General Assembly resolution 45/428 had requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report for the forty-fifth session on the situation of the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. Her delegation was disappointed that the report was not yet available and hoped that it would be distributed in good time for consideration under item 94 (b).

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

51. Mr. ARCILLA (Philippines) said that his delegation took strong exception to the manner in which its statement on the world social situation had been cut short by the Chairman the previous week. The Philippines was fully aware of the agreed time-limit on statements in the Committee and did not in any way question the authority of the Chairman to apply the rules of procedure. At the same time, his delegation was also aware of the practice of granting extensions to the 15-minute time-limit. Such an extension had been given and the representative of the Philippines had been allowed to continue her

(Mr. Arcilla, Philippines)

statement. If she had then exceeded the extended time period, it would have been more appropriate for the Chairman to bring that to her attention rather than to stop her abruptly and call upon the next speaker. That had infringed on the sovereign right of the Philippines to be represented in the Committee. Furthermore, representatives of sovereign States in the United Nations should be more considerate of the feelings of others.

52. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee itself had agreed on the 15-minute time-limit for statements. It was his duty to ensure that that procedure was followed.

53. He recalled that on the previous Friday, a number of delegations had proposed postponing consideration of item 96, on narcotic drugs, because of the delay in distributing the relevant documentation. He had received written confirmation that the report in document A/46/480 would be available on 29 October. On the basis of consultations with delegations, he suggested that the report should be introduced on Thursday, 31 October, and that the general debate on the item should start on Monday, 4 November.

54. Mrs. AGUILERA (Mexico), speaking also on behalf of the delegations of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela, said that in a spirit of compromise she would accept the Chairman's suggestion concerning item 96. Nevertheless, that should in no way be considered a precedent for dealing with similar situations by reducing the number of meetings originally allocated for consideration of an agenda item. The current situation had been caused by a failure to ensure the timely distribution of the relevant documentation. That was the responsibility of the Secretariat, which had not provided a satisfactory explanation for the delay. She hoped that that problem would not recur and would be taken into consideration when deciding on the date for submitting the draft resolution on item 96.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
25th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 29 October 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 25th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-SHAALI (United Arab Emirates)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 94: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

(a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (A/46/3 (chap. VI, sect. B), A/46/56-E/1991/6 and Corr.1, A/46/137-E/1991/40, A/46/281-E/1991/112, A/46/315, 360, 361, 362, 366, 414 and 501/Rev.1)

1. Mr. WAN HANAFIAH (Malaysia) said that, despite the encouraging statistics contained in various United Nations reports, the social situation in many developing countries was far from satisfactory. The failure of Governments to provide adequate social development was due not to a lack of commitment on their part but to a shortage of resources caused by negative economic growth. Many international development agencies were also suffering from a lack of resources. Developing countries aspired no less than developed ones to improve the living standard of their population but were suffering from deterioriating terms of trade, protectionism, high interest rates, debt and a myriad of other international economic problems which had kept them out of the mainstream of world economic development. It was clear from the interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56) that the peace dividend which could legitimately be expected from the end of the cold war had been slow in coming.

2. His own country had launched a new development policy in 1991 aimed at promoting balanced development and continuing the fight against poverty, while seeking to achieve equitable growth. Strategies would be adopted in various sectors, including the development of social services which would focus on education and training, health, housing, the environment and social services for young people and the disabled. With a view to making optimum use of human resources, emphasis would also be placed on the promotion of the family in recognition of its status as a contributor to and beneficiary of economic progress. In that connection, he welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the preparations for the International Year of the Family (A/46/362). He also fully endorsed the view that, in planning and executing the programmes for the year, special attention should be given to socio-economic and cultural conditions in developing countries and to technical cooperation activities intended to assist those countries.

3. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on policies and programmes involving youth (A/46/360), he joined the Secretary-General in underlining the need to provide the resources required to undertake the activities recommended in the proposals for the preparation of a draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond. He favoured an action-oriented programme geared to practical objectives, taking into account the problems facing young people all over the world, particularly drug abuse and crime. The programme should focus on the promotion of training activities for young people, especially those in disadvantaged groups and in rural areas,

(Mr. Wan Hanafiah, Malaysia)

to prepare them to participate in progress and development in their countries. Young people were a country's main asset and it was only right that Governments should provide for their education and training in order to promote national development. The role of the private sector, particularly the multinationals, should be mentioned since they had the resources and the expertise from which young people could benefit. Private sector support for government-sponsored youth programmes was therefore of immense importance. In 1985, Malaysia had adopted a national youth policy under which training centres had been established and then expanded to meet the growing demand for skills training for young people who were unemployed. In line with its aim of promoting self-reliance among young people, in 1987 the Government had also established a special economic development trust fund for young people to provide them with financial assistance in setting up their own businesses, particularly in the field of agriculture, manufacturing industry and commerce. Given the importance it attached to young people, his country intended to contribute to the preparation of the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond, in the hope that it would provide an opportunity for a fruitful exchange of ideas and experience between countries.

4. He welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on ageing for 1992 and beyond (A/46/361) and took particular note of the efforts being made to develop an operational strategy for 1992 to 2001. He welcomed the preliminary draft global targets on ageing for the decade 1992 to 2001 based on the International Plan of Action on Ageing, particularly that relating to the development and promotion of programmes to support family and social networks and maintain integration of the elderly in their communities. He hoped that, through the consultations to be held in the period up to 1992, the General Assembly would be able to endorse a set of practical global targets at its forty-seventh session. In Malaysia the Government had recently proposed measures to provide financial assistance to help keep the elderly in the community and reduce reliance on old people's homes.

5. Although they constituted only a small percentage of the population, the disabled had never been neglected in his country's social and economic development policies. The Government had adopted a national social welfare policy which envisaged increasing assistance for the handicapped, the disabled and the destitute to enable them to participate in and benefit from the socio-economic development of the nation through rehabilitation and training.

6. Mr. LINDGREN ALVES (Brazil), recalling the remarks made by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization (A/46/1) concerning the coexistence of rising affluence and increasing poverty, considered that it was quite accurate to say that poverty undermined the cohesion of societies and States, destroyed the base of human rights and damaged the environment. He shared the Secretary-General's view that the revitalization of the United Nations, from which much was expected in the area

(Mr. Lindgren Alves, Brazil)

of development, should also involve a reinvigoration of the North-South dialogue. After many years of discussion, there could no longer be any doubt that economic and social questions were closely interrelated, that social problems could not be resolved without the necessary resources and that the living standards and social conditions could not be improved without sustainable and non-inflationary economic growth. However, economic growth alone was not enough; it must be accompanied by far-sighted social policies which formed an integral part of development planning at both the national and the international level. In the present-day world, the factors which had the greatest influence on social conditions and living standards, especially in the developing countries, were directly related to economic problems of an international nature. Only progress in international economic cooperation could solve the basic problems of trade and finance that distorted the international economy and that all too often pre-empted opportunities for development. His country therefore looked forward to taking part in the discussions on the possibility of convening a world summit for social development, on which consultations were in progress. It would be useful in due course to discuss the content and scope of that initiative, with particular reference to the close links between economic and social issues.

7. For the Brazilian Government, integrating social concerns into development planning was a priority. The Brazilian Ministry for Social Action had taken various initiatives to improve the social situation of the population in general and, in particular, to reduce malnutrition and infant mortality. It had also undertaken special programmes to assist the most underprivileged social groups, such as poor children and adolescents, the disabled and the elderly. Particular emphasis had been placed on the programmes intended to benefit children and youth. A major programme, funded by public and private sources, was also under way. It provided for the creation of a network of integrated services to provide destitute children with food and medical care and offer them cultural and sporting activities. Moreover, on 12 October, the Brazilian President had authorized the creation of a national fund for children and adolescents to which private individuals and companies could make tax-deductible contributions. That same day, he had launched a programme placing 5,000 youths, mainly street children, in apprenticeship in State-owned companies. It was important that the commitments undertaken at the World Summit for Children continue to receive government attention and that they be given concrete follow-up at the international level.

8. Brazilian society currently comprised over 10 million elderly citizens and was becoming increasingly conscious of the particular needs of that social group, as well as of the extremely valuable contribution which it could make to national development. Brazil supported the overall draft United Nations Principles for Older Persons, and it was convinced that they would be an important source of inspiration for future activities concerning the question of ageing.

(Mr. Lindgren Alves, Brazil)

9. The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons contained interesting proposals based on the new approach of the United Nations, which proposed to move from awareness-raising to action. There was no doubt that equalizing opportunities for all citizens, including the disabled, contributed to increasing and diversifying the pool of human resources available to countries in order to promote their development.

10. Turning to the Secretary-General's interim report on the social situation in the world (A/46/56), he said that Brazil was pleased that, as the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs had stated when introducing the item, the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs proposed to reorient the draft framework for the 1993 report on the world social situation so that it was in consonance with the requests set forth in paragraph 4 of resolution 1989/72 of the Economic and Social Council with respect, inter alia, to the negative trends in social indicators.

11. The report on the work being done within the United Nations system on improving quantitative and qualitative indicators on social conditions and standards of living (A/46/137-E/1991/40) clearly showed that the United Nations was aware of the complex problems posed by the conception of social indicators and of the work which remained to be done in that field. Nevertheless, some of the proposals put forward in the report required considerable refinement, and, in certain instances, should be expressed more clearly before being followed up by Member States or the Secretariat. He expressed doubts regarding the validity of the distinction made, at the request of Member States, between qualitative and quantitative indicators, since, as printed in the report, it was hard to conceive of indicators that were not based on quantitative inputs or that did not find universal expression. Also the distinction made between objective and non-objective indicators did not weem entirely useful. In his opinion, the usefulness of each type of indicator depended on the specific analytical context of the available figures. Sweeping generalizations should be avoided. The simplest indicators were not, therefore, always the best, since aggregation was often not only useful, but indispensable. As for the need to improve the indicators relating to the ecological aspects of development, more importance should be given to the measurement of patterns of production and consumption than to the methods of assessing the sustainability of such schemes and their impact on the protection and rational use of natural resources. Finally, more emphasis should be placed on the question of knowing when and how to combine composite indicators, which could be simultaneously revealing and extremely deceptive. An in-depth technical analysis of the pros and cons of combining economic and social indicators would, in that respect, be highly useful to Member States.

12. Mr. PARSHIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) stated that in all countries, the meaning and quality of life depended largely on the social situation. If the countries of the world succeeded in agreeing to resolve social problems - and with the end of the ideological and political

(Mr. Parshikov, USSR)

confrontation that was now conceivable - they would finally constitute an international community worthy of such a name.

13. There were enough resources to provide everyone with nourishment, education, housing and care. With the end of the cold war, the senseless arms race no longer had any raison d'être. Disarmament had released enormous material and human resources which could be redeployed for the purpose of international cooperation in the political, economic, social and environmental fields, thereby assisting the joint search for solutions to the problems of society, foremost among which were the defence of the rights and interests of man, and particularly the most vulnerable groups: children, youth, women, the disabled and the elderly.

14. The improvement of the world social climate could be made possible only by calling upon the practical and historical experience of all countries. Only the United Nations was capable of creating an organic link between the national, regional, bilateral and multilateral dimensions of the struggle against the inadequacies of social development. It was therefore necessary to strengthen the means available to the main United Nations organ dealing with such questions, namely the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at the United Nations Office at Vienna.

15. As for intergovernmental bodies, he hoped that broadening the composition of the Commission for Social Development would enable the latter to exploit the positive trends which had recently characterized its work and to become the central organ, not only of the Economic and Social Council, but of the entire United Nations system in order to reinforce international cooperation in the field of social development. Moreover, the Commission could serve as preparatory committee for the world summit for social development, should it be decided to organize such a meeting.

16. The regional dimension was one of the most interesting dimensions when it came to determining joint and effective solutions to the social problems of the time. Pan-European social cooperation could be guided by the Economic Commission for Europe, the relevant structures of the Council of Europe, the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Social Affairs in the European Region, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and non-governmental organizations. Such cooperation could draw inspiration from the CSCE conference on the human dimension which had just ended in Moscow; during the conference member States had dealt with the issue of protecting the rights of the disabled and had undertaken to ensure that disabled persons had the opportunity to participate fully and to enjoy equal rights in the life of society.

17. Regional cooperation should make it possible to formulate standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons, along the lines of those which an ad hoc open-ended working group of government experts, created by the Commission for Social Development, had been asked to establish. Such

(Mr. Parshikov, USSR)

new standard rules would facilitate the implementation, at national level, of the World Programme of Action and other international texts.

18. By the year 2025, there would be 1.2 billion people aged over 60, accounting for 14 per cent of the world's total population. The international community should ensure that those who had done so much for society were not reduced to hardship once they had retired from active life. In that respect, the Soviet delegation was heartened by the efforts of the United Nations Secretariat to implement the programme of activities planned to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, which would be celebrated in 1992.

19. His delegation felt that, while the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond should be as concise as possible, it should define precise goals and focus mainly on activities to be undertaken at the national level.

20. The International Year of the Family should serve as an occasion to examine the changing role of men and women in the family, single-parent families, large families and the balance between family and job responsibilities. International Year activities should be oriented towards the well-being and advancement of children and adults. The Year should also promote measures to implement the international strategies, conventions and declarations relating to the situation of women and children.

21. While the recent upheavals in the Soviet Union and throughout Eastern Europe were a sign of progress towards the establishment in Europe of States based on political pluralism and democracy, they also signalled greater political instability and severe economic problems and, thus, social tensions. Indeed, as noted by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization (A/46/1), the restructuring of economic systems did not and would not by itself answer the demands of social justice. Social progress was in fact likely to be jeopardized because of the difficulties of the transition. The fight against hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment would not succeed simply by allowing free rein to market forces. It might even be said that neither privatization, denationalization nor deregulation of the prices of goods and services would by themselves solve social ills.

22. The apparent contradiction between social justice, on one hand, and freedom and democracy, on the other, could be resolved if political development was accompanied by equally effective economic and social measures. States could not survive the complete restructuring of their economies without developing in new directions. Deprived of certain traditional prerogatives, they were temporarily unable to shoulder the social responsibilities they had fulfilled in the past. States were living through a true period of transition and were no longer in a position to resolve complex social problems; at the same time, society did not yet have the material resources or institutions to do the job. The international community and,

(Mr. Parshikov, USSR)

naturally, the United Nations could help promote the process which had led the Eastern European countries to reject a system of State control and embrace democracy and market economy. It was only in unifying collective efforts that the international community could solve social problems, which were no less urgent than political, economic or environmental issues.

23. Mr. ADALA (Kenya) said that, in spite of its efforts to carry out long-term structural adjustments and economic reforms, Africa had not been spared by the severe economic and social crisis sweeping the developing world, which was faced with extremely adverse external conditions such as declining commodity prices, a heavy external debt burden and a growing outflow of resources from developing to developed countries. In fact, as pointed out by the Director of the Social Development Division, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the number of least developed countries had doubled in the past 20 years; women, particularly in the developing countries, still did not have access to training and employment opportunities; by the end of the millenium, 30 to 40 per cent of the population in certain countries would suffer from some form of disability; the number of victims of drug abuse, alcoholism and AIDS was on the rise; and by the year 2025, persons aged 60 or above would represent 15 per cent of the world population and as many as 70 per cent of them would be in developing countries. Added to all that was the unpredictable world situation engendered by recent international political events. In order to grapple with those harsh realities, developing countries would have to rearrange their priorities with due regard for international political developments; in addition, they should bear in mind that development had to be built on a sense of security and confidence in the future; it could not be built on feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, which vulnerable groups in society, such as youths, the disabled, the elderly and families, could not fail to have.

24. In that connection, Kenya was proud of its achievements in reintegrating the disabled by providing them with employment opportunities; those achievements had been made possible by active nationwide campaigns spearheaded by the President himself, coupled with the high priority accorded to the concerns of the disabled under the Government's social development policies. The Government and the people of Kenya were collaborating with other Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals to improve training, placement, employment and housing programmes for disabled persons to enable them, like other citizens, to reap the benefits of society. The Government was also using special education programmes to help disabled individuals reach their full mental, physical and intellectual potential. It encouraged them to work independently, by guaranteeing access to bank loans and other financial services on the same terms offered to other citizens. Many disabled persons had consequently formed cooperatives where they used their varied skills and training. His country was particularly pleased to host, within the framework of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, the XVII World Congress of Rehabilitation International, to be held in Nairobi from 7 to 11 September 1992, sponsored by the President of Kenya, who had been

(Mr. Adala, Kenya)

unwavering in his commitment to improve the living conditions of the disabled in this country.

25. His delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on policies and programmes involving youth (A/46/360) and took note of the valuable proposals concerning the strategy and timetable for the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond. Unemployment was on the list of priority issues recommended by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; that problem would soon reach alarming proportions in Africa failing significant improvement in the economic situation. To combat increasing and uncontrolled migration to urban areas and the attendant increase in demands for housing and social services, his country was endeavouring to improve the quality of life in rural areas so that the young people would remain. It was that very group which could play a particularly valuable role within the rural communities in the areas of hygiene, basic education, health and community programmes. The Declaration of the Heads of State and Government adopted at the World Summit for Children, had emphasized the importance of young people as partners in the effort to improve living conditions for children and carry out development programmes. The role of international and national youth organizations in the promotion and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was of particular importance. In that regard, his delegation was gratified that the Secretary-General had referred in his report to the role and contribution of a Kenyan youth association and would continue to provide support for the country's youth and encourage them to increase their participation in development activities.

26. As in most developing countries with a large rural population, care for the elderly depended on strong traditional family ties. That method had been successful with the exception of regions affected by the rural exodus, where the Kenyan Government had had to call upon non-governmental organizations and religious institutions to assist elderly persons whose younger relatives had migrated to the cities and were longer available to help. Aware of its primary responsibility to assist the elderly, his Government had continued to carry out family-support projects in urban and rural areas. It would endeavour to follow closely United Nations recommendations and guidelines in that field.

27. His delegation wished to express its satisfaction with the Secretary-General's report on the progress made in the preparations for the 1994 International Year of the Family (A/46/362). It associated itself fully with the recommendations contained therein and would shortly submit a report on Kenya's plans for celebrating the Year.

28. Mr. AL-HABASHI (Oman) said that his country attached particular importance to youth in the context of its policy for the development of human resources. Proof thereof was to be found in the many training establishments and centres created by the State to enable youth to participate in the

(Mr. Al-Habashi, Oman)

enlightenment of Oman society as well as in the substantial resources it had invested in the sector.

29. Concerning the aged, the social action of the Government of Oman was motivated by the Arab heritage and civilization and the spiritual values of Islam which advocated social solidarity and respect for the aged. In Oman society, the vast majority of the aged lived with their families. They nevertheless enjoyed social security, a pension system and a health insurance system. In addition, the families concerned could, with the help of the State, start commercial or industrial projects.

30. In regard to disabled persons, the Ministry of Social Affairs had, in 1980, introduced a specialized service responsible for looking after their welfare, their rehabilitation and integration in society. At the same time, the Sultanate was participating actively in international meetings and congresses and was guided in its activities by the international legal instruments adopted in that field.

31. In addition, training programmes were continuing while working visits to friendly countries had beer organized for the benefit of staff responsible for the rehabilitation of disabled persons and for making the population aware of the problem. In addition to providing artificial limbs to the indigent handicapped free of charge, the Government granted social coverage to 57 per cent of the families of such persons.

32. As regards health care, the use of the most modern therapeutic methods had made it possible to overcome many problems suffered by disabled persons. In the field of employment, national legislation stipulated that enterprises and institutions employing more than 50 persons must set aside 2 per cent of jobs for disabled persons. Moreover a wide-ranging study was currently under way with a view to determining the situation of disabled persons in the public service. Lastly, the authorities were employing all the media services to make the population aware of the potential of disabled persons and of means for preventing disablement with a view to developing positive attitudes towards such persons.

33. Mr. DANERI (Argentina) said that the growing economic interdependence and the political and economic upheavals which marked the current international situation had accentuated the serious contradictions which continued to exist between the growing prosperity of certain countries and the permanent erosion of the quality of life in most of the others.

34. As mankind was both the end and the means of development, it was an illusion to try to improve the economic conditions of human life without taking into account the political and social dimensions of the issue. His delegation considered that a world summit for social development, recommended in Economic and Social Council decision 1991/230, would represent one of the best means for undertaking an in-depth analysis of those questions.

(Mr. Daneri, Argentina)

35. The celebration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing represented an opportunity to prepare guidelines on the issue and to draw up a balance of the progress made. His delegation welcomed the proposal for the preparation of a global action programme on ageing for 1992 and beyond as well as the creation of the Banyan Fund Association: A World Fund for Ageing.

36. The situation of young people, whose essential contribution to society it was unnecessary to recall, left much to be desired. The celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year, which coincided with the presentation of the World Youth Programme of Action towards the Year 2000 and Beyond, would enable the international community to promote strategies designed to improve the situation of youth. In that connection Argentina supported Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/11 for the creation of an open-ended ad hoc working group which would have the task of drawing up the draft programme of action on the matter.

37. Argentina attached great importance to the family as the basic unit of society and therefore to the preparation of the activities connected with the celebration of the International Year of the Family in 1994.

38. On the issue of disabled persons, his delegation greatly welcomed the preparations for the elaboration of a long-term strategy to the year 2000 and beyond and approved the principle of the new guidelines for the equalization of opportunities and the participation of disabled persons in society which would make it possible to establish a society for all by the year 2010.

39. Mr. STREJCZEK (Poland) emphasized that, for the past few years, the international community had become increasingly aware of the need to develop new approaches in order to find solutions for social problems. His delegation considered that, in the continuing restructuring of the United Nations, which retained an essential coordinating role at the international level, it would be desirable to make a single organ of the General Assembly responsible for the economic and social sectors, since it was clear that the issues in those two sectors could not be separated. It would therefore be particularly appropriate to deal with the world economic and social situation in a single report. That could provide an opportunity to analyse the impact of transition to a market economy and of related structural adjustment on social conditions.

40. In connection with preparations for the International Year of the Family, the idea for which had been put forward by Poland five years earlier, his delegation wished to inform the Committee that it was the President of Poland himself who would head the Polish Committee for the International Year of the Family. It considered that the commitment of the United Nations to support and coordinate measures designed to resolve the problems of families should lead to the creation at the national level of corresponding institutions which would have the responsibility for promoting the goals of the Year. It was to be hoped that the limited resources available would not prevent the Coordinator

(Mr. Strejcsek, Poland)

for the International Year of the Family and his small secretariat from completing their mission.

41. His delegation also considered that the proposal for convening a world summit on social development was very interesting and hoped that it would lead to a fruitful exchange of views between Member States and non-governmental organizations in various United Nations bodies.

42. Mrs. BUTIKU (United Republic of Tanzania) recalled the noble objectives of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development (elimination of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, equitable income distribution, elimination of illiteracy, improvement of living conditions and realization of social justice, introduction of new international relations enabling every nation to have equal access to scientific and technological progress and to ensure the development of the human person) but stressed that 20 years after the adoption of that Declaration, the majority of developing countries, particularly in Africa, were in a state of extreme poverty which generated social tensions that could easily lead to chaos.

43. The changes which were currently turning the world's political scene upside down should make it possible to devote greater resources and effort to the promotion of progress and justice in the social field.

44. Her delegation believed that the concerted efforts of all Member States would produce positive results in that area. Social development required action at the national and international levels, through bilateral or regional cooperation and in the various forums provided by the United Nations system. Social development was closely related to economic development, since social progress was both an end in itself and a means of furthering economic development. Her delegation therefore supported the proposal to convene a world summit for social development, and was pleased that the Secretary-General had appointed a special representative to hold consultations on the subject. Since the special representative's recommendations and conclusions would undoubtedly be instructive, her delegation was prepared to cooperate fully.

45. Since young people represented the future of nations and had been the nucleus of all socio-economic and socio-political changes at every juncture of history, the Tanzanian Government sought to encourage rural development to stop the mass migration of young people to urban centres, where gainful employment had become increasingly hard to find. It tried to solve the problem of restlessness and unemployment among young people by encouraging them to undertake income-generating self-employment in the informal sector, and had introduced skills training in schools at the early levels to prepare young people for future self-reliance. Since education was seen as a principal vehicle for addressing the youth unemployment problem, her Government was investing heavily in education programmes.

(Mrs. Butiku, United Republic of Tanzania)

46. Her delegation welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme of Action and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. However, more could and should be done to realize the objectives established. Undoubtedly, the Decade had increased the international community's awareness of the problems of disabled persons, especially in the developing countries. However, the integration of the disabled into social, economic, political and cultural life was still just as important as it had been at the time of the Programme's adoption. Her Government believed in totally integrating the disabled into society without marginalizing them into special groups requiring special treatment. The equalization of opportunities for the disabled and efforts to ensure that no segment of society was forgotten, especially in time of need, must be emphasized.

47. In Tanzania, families still had basic responsibility for the elderly. However, in the absence of family support, the State and voluntary organizations cooperated to care for the elderly and would continue to do so.

48. All of those vulnerable groups constituted members of the family. She therefore hoped that the International Year of the Family would focus special attention on the specific difficulties faced by each member of the family unit.

49. The 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/1989/2) stated that all citizens should enjoy equal access to public services and benefits and that resources should be distributed more equitably among regions and among social groups. Those principles underpinned the Tanzanian Government's approach to development at the family, village, regional and national levels. Tanzania sought to give individuals themselves, from the grass-roots level up, the opportunity to determine their own needs and priorities. Although its resources were limited, equity was the determining factor in their distribution.

50. The report also stated that a reduction of tensions in the world economy might be conducive to a major reduction in armaments, which would, in turn, make it possible to devote more resources to the promotion of social progress. Thus, some possibilities might be to write off bilateral public debts, to reduce interest rates, to reschedule debts owed to multilateral agencies and to increase the net flow of resources to developing countries. The report's content was not mere speculation, since the link between disarmament and development, repeatedly acknowledged at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament and, most recently, at the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, had gained universal acceptance. Her delegation therefore urged the international community to consider those proposals seriously and to implement them in order to promote social progress.

51. Ms. MUCAVI (Mozambique) said that the item under consideration was extremely important, since Member States and the entire international community were uniting their efforts to establish a social environment that would promote a better future for mankind. Her delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's very informative interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6) and the analytical work being done within the United Nations system on improving quantitative and qualitative indicators on social conditions and standards of living (A/46/137-E/1991/40), since those indicators were especially important in precisely measuring the social conditions and standards of living in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Although those documents gave an overview of the role and activities of different United Nations bodies in the social field, she regretted that they did not adequately cover the specific problems of the developing countries, where the deterioration of the economic and social situation was still very alarming. In addition to their internal difficulties, such countries had to bear the burden of external debt and its consequences. Without adequate economic and financial resources, it was unlikely that Governments would be able to meet the basic needs of their populations in such areas as food, education and health care.

52. For its part, Mozambique continued to face enormous difficulties as a result of the war of destabilization which had ravaged the country for almost 16 years and had destroyed many social-service facilities and infrastructures. That situation, coupled with the devastating natural disasters of recent years, had made the current social situation more acute, affecting hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians and forcing them to abandon their homes to seek refuge elsewhere. Of the country's 15 million inhabitants, about 90 per cent lived under very difficult social conditions. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, about 200,000 children were in a situation of near-abandonment, and Mozambique's infant mortality rate was among the highest in the world, while its annual population growth rate was estimated at 2.6 per cent. The report also indicated that disabled persons constituted about 5 per cent of the country's population. In a situation of conflict exacerbated by adverse economic and social conditions, the disabled, along with children and the elderly, were among the groups most directly affected. If governmental organizations were to support the disabled, they must begin by studying the phenomenon of disability and the problems affecting disabled persons, and must then define a policy for caring for such persons and ensuring them full enjoyment of their rights. Since the same applied to elderly persons, Mozambique had begun an evaluation process on their situation and their major needs. Efforts had also been made to mobilize community resources and to promote public education to increase awareness of the needs of those social groups and of possibilities for integrating them into society.

53. It was in that framework that her Government had set up a Department of State for Social Affairs, mandated to elaborate policies for the promotion of a national social security system which would protect the disadvantaged and guarantee rehabilitation of the disabled. Mozambique had also adopted economic and social policies for the needy aimed at alleviating the burden of

(Ms. Mucavi, Mozambique)

the high cost of living, which was a direct consequence of the structural adjustment measures introduced in 1987. It would continue to provide food subsidies and health care for the majority of the population and to guarantee free access to education.

54. Her Government was committed to achieving a peaceful settlement of the conflict which was largely responsible for the appalling situation in her country. After a relatively long interval, negotiations between the Government and RENAMO had resumed in September in Rome with encouraging results. The two sides had finally agreed to begin negotiations on matters of substance, including a cease-fire.

55. Since financial and material resources were vital to the implementation of policies to protect vulnerable groups, her delegation expressed its profound gratitude for the assistance that had been provided by friendly countries, governmental and non-governmental organizations and the United Nations.

56. Mr. SHOMAKHI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that it was at the initiative of his country that the International Year of the Disabled Persons had been celebrated in 1991, thereby raising awareness of the needs of those persons who, as members of society, had the same rights as others and represented a valuable resource for development. As part of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1993), many countries had established national committees to encourage national initiatives and make the public more sensitive to the concerns of disabled persons, in an effort to realize the three objectives of the World Programme of Action: protection, rehabilitation and equality of opportunity.

57. Nevertheless, the interest aroused by the issue in 1981 had faded, as demonstrated by the decrease in the number of national committees and the diminution of efforts to achieve the Decade's objectives. The international community must, therefore, turn its attention once again to that task.

58. In that connection, his delegation stressed the need to implement resolution 42/58, in which the General Assembly had recommended the establishment of national disability committees, bearing in mind the guidelines in that field, to which he wished to draw the attention of Member States and governmental and non-governmental organizations.

59. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya welcomed the convening in 1992 in Vancouver, Canada, of an Expert Group Meeting for a Long-Term Strategy to End of the Year 2000 and Beyond, in order to implement the World Programme of Action beyond the Decade.

60. At the same time it reaffirmed the need to implement General Assembly resolution 45/91, which called for a shift from raising public awareness to the establishment of a society for all by the year 2000.

(Mr. Shomakhi, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

61. His delegation wished to call attention to the other vulnerable groups in society: women, children and the elderly, which represented a large percentage of the population in every society. It attached particular importance to efforts in favour of those groups, in particular efforts to promote the transfer of skills, which would help countries develop their own action plans and rehabilitation programmes. In that connection, it commended the role played by the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Disabled Persons and welcomed the implementation of the objectives of the World Programme of Action (A/46/366). It believed that the Fund's mandate should continue after the end of the Decade in 1992. It urged Member States and governmental and non-governmental organizations to contribute to the Fund so that it could meet the growing demands of the developing countries.

62. Drawing its inspiration from the noble principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, his Government had in 1981 promulgated Act No. 3 which specified the allowances and benefits to which disabled persons were entitled, in areas such as housing, education, employment, tax exemptions, and access to public transport, in order to ensure their social and professional integration.

63. That text had been supplemented by Act No. 5, promulgated in 1987, which specified the protection modalities, defined the various categories of disability and the benefits to which each category was entitled and identified the role played by the rehabilitation centres.

64. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, which had a large number of people disabled by explosives and minefields remaining from the Second World War, planned to adopt measures to assist that group.

65. His delegation commended the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna for its efforts, in spite of its limited resources, to implement the World Programme of Action. It also thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Promotion of the United Nations Decade for Disabled Persons, who had taken effective action to mobilize funds. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was in favour of strengthening the Centre so that it could successfully carry out its mandate.

OTHER MATTERS

66. The CHAIRMAN said that he had received a response from the Secretariat to the question raised by Austria concerning Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/16 adopted on 30 May 1991 in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to add specific recommendations, within the overall level of budget of the Organization, to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 to strengthen and rationalize the resources of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in order to enable it better to fulfil its mandates and carry out its activities in the social and related fields and for the advancement of women.

(The Chairman)

67. The Secretariat stated in its reply (1) that the Secretary-General had provided a statement of programme budget implications and had indicated that the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 had already been formulated and submitted by the Secretary-General and that it would not be possible to give effect to the request contained in the draft resolution, which would appear to deal with administrative and budgetary matters which fell within the purview of the Fifth Committee; (2) that the position of the Secretary-General on the matter had not changed. The proposals concerning social development and humanitarian affairs, including the advancement of women, appeared in section 21 of the programme budget, and had been submitted to the Fifth Committee, together with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC). It had never been envisaged that an additional report could be given to the General Assembly on the question; (3) that CPC had discussed the resolution in its report (A/46/16, para. 293); (4) that the assurance given by the Secretariat and reflected in the conclusions and recommendations of CPC (para. 294) referred to another report requested by the General Assembly in its decision 45/428, relating to the situation of the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, and all other autonomous institutes. That report would be submitted to the Third Committee under item 94(b); (5) that should the Third Committee, upon consideration of the report on autonomous institutes, adopt a resolution with administrative and financial implications, a statement on programme budget implications would be submitted to the Third Committee and then to the Fifth Committee.

68. The General Assembly in its resolution 45/248 had expressed concern at the tendency of its Substantive Committees and other intergovernmental bodies to involve themselves in administrative and budgetary matters. At the same time, the questions raised by the Austrian delegation were legitimate, since policies and resources questions could not be separated because they were mutually dependent.

69. Paragraph 28 of the draft resolution submitted by Ghana (A/C.3/46/L.15) might offer a solution, since it provided in effect that the General Assembly should request the Fifth Committee to examine with particular care the proposed programme budget of the Secretary-General as it concerned the programme on the advancement of women. Should the Third Committee adopt the draft resolution, he could transmit it to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee prior to consideration of the report of the Third Committee in the plenary meeting and prior to consideration by the Fifth Committee of the relevant section of the proposed programme budget. The Fifth Committee would thus be informed of the particular concern of another main committee of the General Assembly.

70. Mr. KRENKEL (Austria) took note of the statement that the Chairman had just read out, while expressing surprise that a representative of the Secretariat had not come in person to present it to the Third Committee. It

(Mr. Krenkel, Austria)

was not an acceptable answer to the questions raised by his delegation and the other sponsors of resolution 1991/16. Careful study of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 had shown that the Secretariat had done nothing to meet the request contained in the Council's resolution, which had been adopted by consensus. The Secretariat's statement that it had never been envisaged that an additional report could be given to the General Assembly was tantamount to deliberate disregard of the wishes of Member States and the Economic and Social Council, and that was unacceptable. Austria requested the Chairman to inform the President of the General Assembly of the situation and to ask him to look into the question with the Secretary-General in order to remedy it. It also asked the Chairman to inform the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services, who was responsible for the statement. Austria urged that the proposals should be submitted to the Fifth Committee under section 21 of the proposed programme budget; since all the countries represented on the Third Committee were also represented on the Fifth Committee, there should be no problem in the proposals being submitted only to the Fifth Committee. His delegation would follow developments closely and reserved the right to speak again on the matter in the Fifth Committee.

71. Mr. MORA GODOY (Cuba) said that, since many representatives were not financial experts and did not understand all the workings of the Secretariat and the Third Committee, it would be helpful if they could have a copy of the Secretariat statement so that the Committee could decide what to do.

72. The CHAIRMAN said that he would do his best to have the Secretariat statement circulated to the members of the Committee; he therefore proposed, if the Austrian delegation had no objection, to take no action until the Committee had taken a decision in the matter.

73. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.